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Paley

A

VIEW

OF THE

Evidences of Chriſtianity.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I. Of the direct Hiſtorical Evidence of Chriſtianity, and wherein it is diſtinguiſhed from the Evidence alleged for other Miracles.

PART II. Of the Auxiliary Evidences of Chriſtianity.

PART III. A brief Conſideration of ſome popular Objections.

By WILLIAM PALEY, M. A.
ARCHDEACON OF CARLISLE.

THREE VOLUMES IN ONE.

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TO THE

HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

JAMES YORK, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF *ELY.*

MY LORD,

WHEN five years ago, an important ſtation in the Univerſity of Cambridge awaited your Lordſhip's diſpoſal, you were pleaſed to offer it to me. The circumſtances, under which this offer was made, demand a public acknowledgment. I had never ſeen your Lordſhip: I poſſeſſed no connexion which could poſſibly recommend me to your favour: I was known to you, only by my endeavours, in common with many others, to diſcharge my duty as a tutor in the Univerſity; and by ſome very imperfect, but certainly well intended, and, as you thought, uſeful publications ſince. In an age by no means wanting in examples of honourable patronage, although this deſerve not to be mentioned, in reſpect to the object of your Lordſhip's choice, it is inferior to none, in the purity and diſintereſtedneſs of the motives which ſuggeſted it.

How the following work may be received, I pretend not to foretel. My firſt prayer concerning it is, that it may do good to any: my ſecond hope,

that it may aſſiſt, what it hath always been my earneſt wiſh to promote, the religious part of an academical education. If in this latter view it might ſeem in any degree to excuſe your Lordſhip's judgment of its author, I ſhall be gratified by the reflection, that to a kindneſs flowing from public principles, I have made the beſt public return in my power.

In the mean time, and in every event, I rejoice in the opportunity here afforded me, of teſtifying the ſenſe I entertain of your Lordſhip's conduct, and of a notice which I regard, as the moſt flattering diſtinction of my life.

I am, my Lord,
With ſentiments of gratitude and reſpect,
Your Lordſhip's faithful,
and moſt obliged ſervant,
W. PALEY.

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Preparatory Conſiderations.

I DEEM it unneceſſary to prove that mankind ſtood in need of a revelation, becauſe I have met with no ſerious perſon who thinks that even under the Chriſtian revelation we have too much light, or any aſſurance which is ſuperfluous. I deſire moreover that in judging of Chriſtianity it may be remembered, that the queſtion lies between this religion and none: for if the Chriſtian religion be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will ſupport the pretenſions of any other.

Suppoſe then the world we live in to have had a Creator; ſuppoſe it to appear, from the predominant aim and tendency of the proviſions and contrivances obſervable in the univerſe, that the Deity, when he formed it, conſulted for the happineſs of his ſenſitive creation; ſuppoſe the diſpoſition which dictated this council to continue; ſuppoſe a part of the creation to have received faculties from their Maker, by which they are capable of rendering a moral obedience to his will, and of voluntarily purſuing any end for which he has deſigned them; ſuppoſe the Creator to intend for theſe his rational and accountable agents a ſecond ſtate of exiſtence, in which their ſituation will be regulated by their behaviour in the firſt ſtate, by which ſuppoſition (and by no other) the objection to the divine government in not putting a difference between the good and the bad, and the inconſiſtency of this confuſion with the care and benevolence diſcoverable in the works of the Deity, is done away; ſuppoſe it to be of the utmoſt importance to the ſubjects of this diſpenſation to know what is intended for them, that is, ſuppoſe the knowledge of it to be highly conducive to the happineſs of the ſpecies, a purpoſe which ſo many proviſions of nature are calculated to promote: Suppoſe, nevertheleſs, almoſt the whole race, either by the imperfection of their faculties, the misfortune of their ſituation, or by the loſs of ſome prior revelation, to want this knowledge, and not to be likely without the aid of a new revelation to attain it; under theſe circumſtances is it improbable that a revelation ſhould be made? Is it incredible that God ſhould interpoſe for ſuch a purpoſe? Suppoſe him to deſign for mankind a future ſtate, is it unlikely that he ſhould acquaint them with it?

Now in what way can a revelation be made but by miracles? In none which we are able to conceive. Conſequently, in

whatever degree it is probable or not very improbable that a revelation ſhould be communicated to mankind at all, in the ſame degree is it probable or not very improbable that miracles ſhould be wrought. Therefore when miracles are related to have been wrought in the promulgating of a revelation manifeſtly wanted, and, if true, of ineſtimable value, the improbability which ariſes from the miraculous nature of the things related, is not greater than the original improbability that ſuch a revelation ſhould be imparted by God.

I wiſh it however to be correctly underſtood, in what manner, and to what extent, this argument is alleged. We do not aſſume the attributes of the Deity, or the exiſtence of a future ſtate, in order to *prove* the reality of miracles. That reality always muſt be proved by evidence. We aſſert only that in miracles adduced in ſupport of revelation, there is not any ſuch antecedent improbability as no teſtimony can ſurmount. And, for the purpoſe of maintaining this aſſertion, we contend, that the incredibility of miracles related to have been wrought in atteſtation of a meſſage from God, conveying intelligence of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, and teaching mankind how to prepare themſelves for that ſtate, is not in itſelf greater than the event, call it either probable or improbable, of the two following propoſitions being true, namely, firſt, that a future ſtate of exiſtence ſhould be deſtined by God for his human creation, and ſecondly, that, being ſo deſtined, he ſhould acquaint them with it. It is not neceſſary for our purpoſe that theſe propoſitions be capable of proof, or even that by arguments drawn from the light of nature, they can be made out to be probable. It is enough that we are able to ſay concerning them, that they are not ſo violently improbable, ſo contradictory to what we already believe of the divine power and character, that either the propoſitions themſelves, or facts ſtrictly connected with the propoſitions, (and therefore no farther improbable than they are improbable) ought to be rejected at firſt ſight, and to be rejected by whatever ſtrength or complication of evidence they be atteſted.

This is the prejudication we would reſiſt. For to this length does a modern objection to miracles go, viz. that no human teſtimony can in any caſe render them credible. I think the reflection above ſtated, that, if there be a revelation, there muſt be miracles; and that, under the circumſtances in which the human ſpecies are placed, a revelation is not improbable, or not improbable in any great degree, to be a fair anſwer to the whole objection.

But since it is an objection which stands in the very threshold of our argument, and, if admitted, is a bar to every proof, and to all future reasoning upon the subject, it may be necessary, before we proceed farther, to examine the principle upon which it professes to be founded: which principle is concisely this, that it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false.

Now there appears a small ambiguity in the term "experience," and in the phrases "contrary to experience," or "contradicting "experience," which it may be necessary to remove in the first place. Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is *then* only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place, at which time and place we being present, did not perceive it to exist; as if it should be asserted, that in a particular room, and at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raised from the dead, in which room, and at the time specified, we being present and looking on, perceived no such event to have taken place. Here the assertion is contrary to experience properly so called; and this a contrariety which no evidence can surmount. It matters nothing, whether the fact be of a miraculous nature or not. But although this be the experience, and the contrariety, which Archbp. Tillotson alleged in the quotation with which Mr. Hume opens his essay, it is certainly not that experience, nor that contrariety, which Mr. Hume himself intended to object. And, short of this, I know no intelligible signification which can be affixed to the term "contrary to experience," but one, viz. that of not having ourselves experienced any thing similar to the thing related, or such things not being generally experienced by others. I say not "generally," for to state, concerning the fact in question, that no such thing was *ever* experienced, or that *universal* experience is against it, is to assume the subject of the controversy.

Now the improbability which arises from the want (for this properly is a want, not a contradiction) of experience, is only equal to the probability there is, that if the thing were true, we should experience things similar to it, or that such things would be generally experienced. Suppose it then to be true that miracles were wrought upon the first promulgation of Christianity, when nothing but miracles could decide its authority, is it certain that such miracles would be repeated so often, and in so many places, as to become objects of general experience? Is it a

probability approaching to certainty ? Is it a probability of any great ſtrength or force ? Is it ſuch as no evidence can encounter ? and yet this probability is the exact converſe, and therefore the exact meaſure of the improbability which ariſes from the want of experience, and which Mr. Hume repreſents as invincible by human teſtimony.

It is not like alleging a new law of nature, or a new experiment in natural philoſophy, becauſe, when theſe are related, it is expected that, under the ſame circumſtances, the ſame effect will follow univerſally ; and in proportion as this expectation is juſtly entertained, the want of a correſponding experience negatives the hiſtory. But to expect concerning a miracle that it ſhould ſucceed upon repetition, is to expect that which would make it ceaſe to be a miracle, which is contrary to its nature as ſuch, and would totally deſtroy the uſe and purpoſe for which it was wrought.

The force of experience as an objection to miracles is founded in the preſumption, either that the courſe of nature is invariable, or that, if it be ever varied, variations will be frequent and general. Has the neceſſity of this alternative been demonſtrated ? Permit us to call the courſe of nature the agency of an intelligent being, and is there any good reaſon for judging this ſtate of the caſe to be probable ? Ought we not rather to expect, that ſuch a being, upon occaſions of peculiar importance, may interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet, that ſuch occaſions ſhould return ſeldom ; that theſe interruptions conſequently ſhould be confined to the experience of a few ; that the want of it, therefore, in many, ſhould be matter neither of ſurpriſe nor objection ?

But as a continuation of the argument from experience it is ſaid, that, when we advance accounts of miracles, we aſſign effects without cauſes, or we attribute effects to cauſes inadequate to the purpoſe, or to cauſes of the operation of which we have no experience. Of what cauſes, we may aſk, and of what effects does the objection ſpeak ? If it be anſwered that, when we aſcribe the cure of the palſy to a touch, of blindneſs to the anointing of the eyes with clay, or the raiſing of the dead to a word, we lay ourſelves open to this imputation, we reply that we aſcribe no ſuch effects to ſuch cauſes. We perceive no virtue or energy in theſe things more than in other things of the ſame kind. They are merely ſigns to connect a miracle with its end. The effect we aſcribe ſimply to the

volition of the Deity; of whoſe exiſtence and power, not to ſay of whoſe preſence and agency, we have previous and independent proof. We have therefore all we ſeek for in the works of rational agents, a ſufficient power and an adequate motive. In a word, once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not incredible.

Mr. Hume ſtates the caſe of miracles to be a conteſt of oppoſite improbabilities; that is to ſay, a queſtion whether it be more improbable that the miracle ſhould be true, or the teſtimony falſe; and this I think a fair account of the controverſy. But herein I remark a want of argumentative juſtice, that, in deſcribing the improbability of miracles, he ſuppreſſes all thoſe circumſtances of extenuation which reſult from our knowledge of the exiſtence, power and diſpoſition of the Deity, his concern in the creation, the end anſwered by the miracle, the importance of that end, and its ſubſerviency to the plan purſued in the works of nature. As Mr. Hume has repreſented the queſtion, miracles are alike incredible to him who is previouſly aſſured of the conſtant agency of a Divine Being, and to him who believes that no ſuch being exiſts in the univerſe. They are equally incredible, whether related to have been wrought upon occaſions the moſt deſerving, and for purpoſes the moſt beneficial, or for no aſſignable end whatever, or for an end confeſſedly trifling or pernicious. This ſurely cannot be a correct ſtatement. In adjuſting alſo the other ſide of the balance, the ſtrength and weight of teſtimony, this author has provided an anſwer to every poſſible accumulation of hiſtorical proof, by telling us, that we are not obliged to explain how the ſtory or the evidence aroſe. Now I think we *are* obliged; not, perhaps, to ſhew by poſitive accounts how it did, but by a probable hypotheſis how it might ſo happen. The exiſtence of the teſtimony is a phenomenon. The truth of the fact ſolves the phenomenon. If we reject this ſolution, we ought to have ſome other to reſt in; and none even by our adverſaries can be admitted, which is not conſiſtent with the principles that regulate human affairs and human conduct at preſent, or which makes men *then* to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.

But the ſhort conſideration which, independently of every other, convinces me that there is no ſolid foundation in Mr. Hume's concluſion, is the following: When a theorem is propoſed to a mathematician, the firſt thing he does with it is to

try it upon a ſimple caſe; and, if it produce a falſe reſult, he is ſure that there muſt be ſome miſtake in the demonſtration. Now to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume's theorem. If twelve men, whoſe probity and good ſenſe I had long known, ſhould ſeriouſly and circumſtantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impoſſible that they ſhould be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumor of this account, ſhould call theſe men into his preſence, and offer them a ſhort propoſal, either to confeſs the impoſture, or ſubmit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they ſhould refuſe with one voice to acknowledge that there exiſted any falſehood or impoſture in the caſe; if this threat were communicated to them ſeparately, yet with no different effect; if it was at laſt executed; if I myſelf ſaw them, one after another, conſenting to be racked, burnt, or ſtrangled, rather than give up the truth of their account: ſtill, if Mr. Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to ſay that there exiſts not a ſceptic in the world, who would not believe them; or who would defend ſuch incredulity.

Inſtances of ſpurious miracles ſupported by ſtrong apparent teſtimony undoubtedly demand examination. Mr. Hume has endeavoured to fortify his argument by ſome examples of this kind. I hope in a proper place to ſhow that none of them reach the ſtrength or circumſtances of the Chriſtian evidence. In theſe however conſiſts the weight of his objection. In the principle itſelf I am perſuaded there is none.

PART THE FIRST.

Of the direct Historical Evidence of Christianity, and wherein it is distinguished from the Evidence alleged for other Miracles.

THE two propositions which I shall endeavour to establish, are these:

I. That there is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

II. That there is *not* satisfactory evidence that persons, professing to be original witnesses of other miracles, in their nature as certain as these are, have ever acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in consequence of their belief of those accounts.

The first of these propositions, as it forms the argument, will stand at the head of the following nine chapters.

CHAP. I.

There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

TO support this proposition two points are necessary to be made out; first, that the founder of the institution, his associates and immediate followers, acted the part which the proposition imputes to them: secondly, that they did so, in attestation of the miraculous history recorded in our scriptures, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of this history.

Before we produce any particular testimony to the activity and sufferings which compose the subject of our first assertion, it

will be proper to conſider the degree of probability which the aſſertion derives from the *nature of the caſe*, that is, by inferences from thoſe parts of the caſe which, in point of fact, are on all hands acknowledged.

Firſt then, the Chriſtian religion exiſts, and therefore by ſome means or other was eſtabliſhed. Now it either owes the principle of its eſtabliſhment, i. e. its firſt publication, to the activity of the perſon who was the founder of the inſtitution, and of thoſe who were joined with him in the undertaking, or we are driven upon the ſtrange ſuppoſition, that, although they might lie by, others would take it up; although they were quiet and ſilent, other perſons buſied themſelves in the ſucceſs and propagation of their ſtory. This is perfectly incredible. To me it appears little leſs than certain, that, if the firſt announcing of the religion by the founder had not been followed up by the zeal and induſtry of his immediate diſciples, the ſcheme muſt have expired in its birth. Then as to the kind and degree of exertion which was employed, and the mode of life to which theſe perſons ſubmitted, we reaſonably ſuppoſe it to be like that, which we obſerve in all others who voluntarily become miſſionaries of a new faith. Frequent, earneſt and laborious preaching, conſtantly converſing with religious perſons upon religion, a ſequeſtration from the common pleaſures, engagements and varieties of life, and an addiction to one ſerious object, compoſe the habits of ſuch men. I do not ſay that this mode of life is without enjoyment, but I ſay that the enjoyment ſprings from ſincerity. With a conſciouſneſs at the bottom, of hollowneſs and falſehood, the fatigue and reſtraint would become inſupportable. I am apt to believe that very few hypocrites engage in theſe undertakings; or, however, perſiſt in them long. Ordinarily ſpeaking, nothing can overcome the indolence of mankind, the love which is natural to moſt tempers of cheerful ſociety and cheerful ſcenes, or the deſire, which is common to all, of perſonal eaſe and freedom, but conviction.

Secondly, it is alſo highly probable, from the nature of the caſe, that the propagation of the new religion was attended with difficulty and danger. As addreſſed to the Jews it was a ſyſtem, adverſe not only to their habitual opinions, but to thoſe opinions upon which their hopes, their partialities, their pride, their conſolation was founded. This people, with or without reaſon, had worked themſelves into a perſuaſion, that ſome ſignal and greatly advantageous change, was to be effected in the

condition of their country, by the agency of a long-promised messenger from heaven. The rulers of the Jews, their leading sect, their priesthood, had been the authors of this persuasion to the common people. So that it was not merely the conjecture of theoretical divines, or the secret expectation of a few recluse devotees, but it was become the popular hope and passion, and, like all popular opinions, undoubting, and impatient of contradiction. They clung to this hope under every misfortune of their country, and with more tenacity as their dangers or calamities increased. To find, therefore, that expectations so gratifying were to be worse than disappointed, that they were to end in the diffusion of a mild unambitious religion, which, instead of victories and triumphs, instead of exalting their nation and institution above the rest of the world, was to advance those whom they despised to an equality with themselves, in those very points of comparison in which they most valued their own distinction, could be no very pleasing discovery to a Jewish mind; nor could the messengers of such intelligence expect to be well received or easily credited. The doctrine was equally harsh and novel. The extending of the kingdom of God to those who did not conform to the law of Moses, was a notion that had never before entered into the thoughts of a Jew.

The character of the new institution was, in other respects also, ungrateful to Jewish habits and principles. Their own religion was in a high degree technical. Even the enlightened Jew placed a great deal of stress upon the ceremonies of his law, saw in them a great deal of virtue and efficacy; the gross and vulgar had scarcely any thing else; and the hypocritical and ostentatious magnified them above measure, as being the instruments of their own reputation and influence. The Christian scheme, without formally repealing the Levitical code, lowered its estimation extremely. In the place of strictness and zeal in performing the observances which that code prescribed, or which tradition had added to it, the new sect preached faith, well-regulated affections, inward purity, and moral rectitude of disposition, as the true ground, on the part of the worshipper, of merit and acceptance with God. This, however rational it may appear, or recommending to us at present, did not by any means facilitate the plan then. On the contrary, to disparage those qualities which the highest characters in the country valued themselves most upon, was a sure way of making powerful enemies. As if the frustration of the national hope

was not enough, the long esteemed merit of ritual zeal and punctuality was to be decried, and that by Jews preaching to Jews.

The ruling party at Jerusalem had just before crucified the founder of the religion. That is a fact which will not be disputed. They therefore who stood forth to preach the religion, must necessarily reproach these rulers with an execution, which they could not but represent as an unjust and cruel murder. This would not render their office more easy, or their situation more safe.

With regard to the interference of the Roman government which was then established in Judea, I should not expect, that, despising, as it did, the religion of the country, it would, if left to itself, animadvert, either with much vigilance, or much severity, upon the schisms and controversies which arose within it. Yet there was that in Christianity which might easily afford a handle of accusation with a jealous government. The Christians avowed an unqualified obedience to a new master. They avowed also that he was the person who had been foretold to the Jews under the suspected title of king. The spiritual nature of this kingdom, the consistency of this obedience with civil subjection, were distinctions too refined to be entertained by a Roman president, who viewed the business at a great distance, or through the medium of very hostile representations. Our histories accordingly inform us, that this was the turn which the enemies of Jesus gave to his character and pretensions in their remonstrances with Pontius Pilate. And Justin Martyr, about a hundred years afterwards, complains that the same mistake prevailed in his time: "Ye having heard that we are waiting for a kingdom, suppose, without distinguishing, that we mean a human kingdom, when in truth we speak of that which is with God."[a] And it was undoubtedly a natural source of calumny and misconstruction.

The preachers therefore of Christianity had to contend with prejudice, backed by power. They had to come forward to a disappointed people, to a priesthood possessing a considerable share of municipal authority, and actuated by strong motives of opposition and resentment; and they had to do this under a foreign government, to whose favour they made no pretensions, and which was constantly surrounded by their enemies. The

[a] Ap. 1 mc. p. 16. ed. Thirl.

well-known, becauſe the experienced, fate of reformers, whenever the reformation ſubverts ſome reigning opinion, and does not proceed upon a change already taken place in the ſentiments of a country, will not allow, much leſs lead us, to ſuppoſe, that the firſt propagators of Chriſtianity at Jeruſalem and in Judea, with the difficulties and the enemies which they had to contend with, and entirely deſtitute, as they were, of force, authority or protection, could execute their miſſion with perſonal eaſe and ſafety.

Let us next inquire what might reaſonably be expected by the preachers of Chriſtianity when they turned themſelves to the heathen public. Now the firſt thing that ſtrikes us is, that the religion they carried with them was *excluſive*. It denied, without reſerve the truth of every article of heathen mythology, the exiſtence of every object of their worſhip. It accepted no compromiſe: it admitted no comprehenſion. It muſt prevail, if it prevailed at all, by the overthrow of every ſtatue, altar and temple in the world. It will not eaſily be credited that a deſign, ſo bold as this was, could in any age be attempted to be carried into execution with impunity.

For it ought to be conſidered, that this was not ſetting forth, or magnifying the character and worſhip of ſome new competitor for a place in the Pantheon, whoſe pretenſions might be diſcuſſed or aſſerted without queſtioning the reality of any others. It was pronouncing all other gods to be falſe, and all other worſhip vain. From the facility with which the Polytheiſm of ancient nations admitted new objects of worſhip into the number of their acknowledged divinities, or the patience with which they might entertain propoſals of this kind, we can argue nothing as to their toleration of a ſyſtem, or of the publiſhers and active propagators of a ſyſtem, which ſwept away the very foundation of the exiſting eſtabliſhment. The one was nothing more than what it would be, in Popiſh countries, to add a ſaint to the calendar; the other was to aboliſh and tread under foot the calendar itſelf.

Secondly, it ought alſo to be conſidered, that this was not the caſe of philoſophers propounding in their books or in their ſchools, doubts concerning the truth of the popular creed, or even avowing their diſbelief of it. Theſe philoſophers did not go about from place to place to collect proſelytes from amongſt the common people; to form in the heart of the country ſocieties profeſſing their tenets; to provide for the order, inſtruction,

and permanency of these societies; nor did they enjoin their followers to withdraw themselves from the public worship of the temples or refuse a compliance with rites instituted by the laws.[b] These things are what the Christians did, and what the philosophers did not; and in these consisted the activity and danger of the enterprise.

Thirdly, it ought also to be considered, that this danger proceeded not merely from solemn acts and public resolutions of the state, but from sudden bursts of violence at particular places, from the license of the populace, the rashness of some magistrates, and the negligence of others, from the influence and instigation of interested adversaries, and, in general, from the variety and warmth of opinion which an errand so novel and extraordinary could not fail of exciting. I can conceive that the teachers of Christianity might both fear and suffer much from these causes without any general persecution being denounced against them by imperial authority. Some length of time, I should suppose, might pass before the vast machine of the Roman empire would be put in motion, or its attention be obtained to religious controversy; but, during that time, a great deal of ill usage might be endured, by a set of friendless, unprotected travellers, telling men, wherever they came, that the religion of their ancestors, the religion in which they had been brought up, the religion of the state and of the magistrate, the rites which they frequented, the pomp which they admired, was throughout a system of folly and delusion.

Nor do I think that the teachers of Christianity would find protection in that general disbelief of the popular theology, which is supposed to have prevailed amongst the intelligent part of the heathen public. It is by no means true, that unbelievers are usually tolerant. They are not disposed (and why should they?) to endanger the present state of things, by suffering a religion of which they believe nothing, to be disturbed by another of which they believe as little. They are ready themselves to conform to any thing; and are, oftentimes, amongst the foremost to procure conformity from others, by any method which

[b] The best of the ancient philosophers, Plato, Cicero and Epictetus, allowed, or rather enjoined men to worship the gods of the country, and in the established form. See passages to this purpose, collected from their works by Dr. Clarke, Nat. and Rev. Rel. p. 180. Ed. V. Except Socrates, they all thought it wiser to comply with the laws, than to contend.

they think likely to be efficacious. When was ever a change of religion patroniſed by infidels? How little, notwithſtanding the reigning ſcepticiſm, and the magnified liberality of that age, the true principles of toleration were underſtood by the wiſeſt men amongſt them, may be gathered from two eminent and unconteſted examples. The younger Pliny, poliſhed, as he was, by all the literature of that ſoft and elegant period, could gravely pronounce this monſtrous judgment: "Thoſe who perſiſted in declaring themſelves Chriſtians, I ordered to be led away to puniſhment, (i. e. to execution) for I DID NOT DOUBT, *whatever it was that they confeſſed, that contumacy and inflexible obſtinacy ought to be puniſhed.*" His maſter Trajan, a mild and accompliſhed prince, went, nevertheleſs, no farther in his ſentiments of moderation and equity, than what appears in the following reſcript: "The Chriſtians are not to be ſought for, but if any are brought before you, and convicted, they are to be puniſhed." And this direction he gives, after it had been reported to him by his own preſident, that, by the moſt ſtrict examination, nothing could be diſcovered in the principles of theſe perſons, but, "a bad and exceſſive ſuperſtition," accompanied, it ſeems, with an oath or mutual federation, "to allow themſelves in no crime or immoral conduct whatever." The truth is, the ancient heathens conſidered religion entirely as an affair of ſtate, as much under the tuition of the magiſtrate as any other part of the police. The religion of that age was not merely allied to the ſtate; it was incorporated into it. Many of its offices were adminiſtered by the magiſtrate. Its titles of pontiffs, augurs and flamens, were borne by ſenators, conſuls and generals. Without diſcuſſing therefore the truth of the theology, they reſented every affront put upon the eſtabliſhed worſhip, as a direct oppoſition to the authority of government.

Add to which that the religious ſyſtems of thoſe times, however ill ſupported by evidence, had been long eſtabliſhed. The *ancient* religion of a country has always many votaries, and ſometimes not the fewer, becauſe its origin is hidden in remoteneſs and obſcurity. Men have a natural veneration for antiquity, eſpecially in matters of religion. What Tacitus ſays of the Jewiſh, was more applicable to the heathen eſtabliſhment, "hi ritus, quoquo modo inducti, antiquitate defenduntur." It was alſo a ſplendid and ſumptuous worſhip It had its prieſthood, its endowments, its temples. Statuary painting, architecture, and muſic, contributed their effect to its ornament and magniſi-

cence. It abounded in festival shows and solemnities, to which the common people are greatly addicted; and which were of a nature to engage them much more than any thing of that sort among us. These things would retain great numbers on its side by the fascination of spectacle and pomp, as well as interest many in its preservation by the advantage which they drew from it. "It was moreover interwoven," as Mr. Gibbons rightly represents it, "with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or private life, with all the offices and amusements of society." Upon the due celebration also of its rites, the people were taught to believe, and did believe, that the prosperity of their country in a great measure depended.

I am willing to accept the account of the matter which is given by Mr. Gibbons: "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful;" and I would ask, from which of these three classes of men, were the Christian missionaries to look for protection or impunity. Could they expect it from the people, "whose acknowledged confidence in the public religion" they subverted from its foundation? from the philosopher, who, "considering all religions as equally false," would of course rank theirs amongst the number, with the addition of regarding them as busy and troublesome zealots? or from the magistrate, who, satisfied with the "utility" of the subsisting religion, would not be likely to countenance a spirit of proselytism and innovation; a system, which declared war against every other, and which, if it prevailed, must end in a total rupture of public opinion; an upstart religion, in a word, which was not content with its own authority, but must disgrace all the settled religions of the world? It was not to be imagined that he would endure with patience, that the religion of the emperor and of the state should be calumniated and borne down by a company of superstitious and despicable Jews.

Lastly; the *nature of the case* affords a strong proof, that the original teachers of Christianity in consequence of their new profession, entered upon a new and singular course of life. We may be allowed to presume, that the institution which they preached to others, they conformed to in their own persons; because this is no more than what every teacher of a new religion both does, and must do, in order to obtain either proselytes or hearers. The change which this would produce was very

conſiderable. It is a change which we do not eaſily eſtimate, becauſe, ourſelves and all about us being habituated to the inſtitution from our infancy, it is what we neither experience nor obſerve. After men became Chriſtians, much of their time was ſpent in prayer and devotion, in religious meetings, in celebrating the euchariſt, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in an affectionate intercourſe with one another, and correſpondence with other ſocieties. Perhaps their mode of life in its form and habit was not very unlike that of the Unitas fratrum, or of modern Methodiſts. Think then what it was to become *ſuch* at Corinth, at Epheſus, at Antioch, or even at Jeruſalem. How new, how alien from all their former habits and ideas, and from thoſe of every body about them? What a revolution there muſt have been of opinions and prejudices to bring the matter to this? We know what the precepts of the religion are; how pure, how benevolent, how diſintereſted a conduct they enjoin; and that this purity and benevolence is extended to the very thoughts and affections. We are not perhaps at liberty to take for granted, that the lives of the preachers of Chriſtianity were as perfect as their leſſons: but we are entitled to contend, that the obſervable part of their behaviour muſt have agreed in a great meaſure with the duties which they taught. There was therefore, which is all that we aſſert, a courſe of life purſued by them, different from that which they before led. And this is of great importance. Men are brought to any thing almoſt ſooner than to change their habit of life, eſpecially, when the change is either inconvenient, or made againſt the force of natural inclination, or with the loſs of accuſtomed indulgencies. "It is the moſt difficult of all things, to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous ones, as every one may judge from what he feels in himſelf, as well as from what he ſees in others."[c] It is almoſt like making men over again.

Left then to myſelf, and without any more information than a knowledge of the exiſtence of the religion, of the general ſtory upon which it is founded, and that no act of power, force or authority, was concerned in its firſt ſucceſs, I ſhould conclude, from the very nature and exigency of the caſe, that the author of the religion during his life, and his immediate diſciples after his death, *exerted* themſelves in ſpreading and publiſhing the inſti-

[c] Hartley's Eſſ. on Man, p. 190.

tution throughout the country in which it began, and into which it was firſt carried; that, in the proſecution of this purpoſe, they underwent the labours and troubles which we obſerve the propagators of new ſects to undergo; that the attempt muſt neceſſarily have alſo been in a high degree dangerous; that from the ſubject of the miſſion, compared with the fixed opinions and prejudices of thoſe to whom the miſſionaries were to addreſs themſelves, they could hardly fail of encountering ſtrong and frequent oppoſition; that, by the hand of government, as well as from the ſudden fury and unbridled licenſe of the people, they would oftentimes experience injurious and cruel treatment; that, at any rate, they muſt have always had ſo much to fear for their perſonal ſafety, as to have paſſed their lives in a ſtate of conſtant peril and anxiety; and laſtly, that their mode of life and conduct, viſibly at leaſt, correſponded with the inſtitution which they delivered, and ſo far, was both new and required continual ſelf-denial.

CHAP. II.

There is ſatisfactory evidence, that many, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of theſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.

AFTER thus conſidering what was likely to happen, we are next to inquire how the tranſaction is repreſented in the ſeveral accounts that have come down to us. And this inquiry is properly preceded by the other, foraſmuch as the reception of theſe accounts may depend in part upon the credibility of what they contain.

The obſcure and diſtant view of Chriſtianity, which ſome of the heathen writers of that age had gained, and which a few paſſages in their remaining works incidentally diſcover to us, offers itſelf to our notice in the firſt place: becauſe, ſo far as this evidence goes, it is the conceſſion of adverſaries; the ſource from which it is drawn is unſuſpected. Under this head a quotation from Tacitus, well known to every ſcholar, muſt be inſerted as deſerving of particular attention. The reader will

bear in mind that this paſſage was written about ſeventy years after Chriſt's death, and that it relates to tranſactions which took place about thirty years after that event. Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome in the time of Nero, and of the ſuſpicions which were entertained that the emperor himſelf was concerned in cauſing it, the hiſtorian proceeds in his narrative and obſervations thus :

"But neither theſe exertions, nor his largeſſes to the people, nor his offerings to the gods, did away the infamous imputation under which Nero lay, of having ordered the city to be ſet on fire. To put an end therefore to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the moſt cruel puniſhments upon a ſet of people, who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and called by the vulgar, *Chriſtians*. The founder of that name was Chriſt, who ſuffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under his procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious ſuperſtition, thus checked for a while, broke out again, and ſpread, not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome alſo, whither every thing bad upon earth finds its way, and is practiſed. Some who confeſſed their ſect were firſt ſeized, and afterwards by their information a vaſt multitude were apprehended, who were convicted, not ſo much of the crime of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind. Their ſufferings at their execution were aggravated by inſult and mockery ; for ſome were diſguiſed in the ſkins of wild beaſts, and worried to death by dogs—ſome were crucified— and others were wrapt in pitched ſhirts,[a] and ſet on fire when the day cloſed, that they might ſerve as lights to illuminate the night. Nero lent his own gardens for theſe executions ; and exhibited at the ſame time a mock Circenſian entertainment, being a ſpectator of the whole in the dreſs of a charioteer, ſometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and ſometimes viewing the ſpectacles from his car. This conduct made the ſufferers pitied ; and though they were criminals, and deſerving the ſevereſt puniſhment, yet they were conſidered as ſacrificed, not ſo much out of a regard to the public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man."

[a] This is rather a paraphraſe, but is juſtified by what the Scholiaſt upon Juvenal ſays—"Nero maleficos homines tedâ et papyro et cerâ ſuperves tiebat, et ſic ad ignem ad moveri jubebat." Lard. Jueſt. et Heath. Teſt. vol. I. p. 359.

Our concern with this paſſage at preſent, is only ſo far as it affords a preſumption in ſupport of the propoſition which we maintain, concerning the activity and ſufferings of the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity. Now, conſidered in this view, it proves three things; 1ſt, that the founder of the inſtitution was put to death; 2dly, that, in the ſame country in which he was put to death, the religion, after a ſhort check, broke out again and ſpread; 3dly, that it ſo ſpread as that, within thirty-four years from the author's death, a very great number of Chriſtians (ingens eorum multitudo) were found at Rome. From which fact, the two following inferences may be fairly drawn; firſt, that, if in the ſpace of thirty-four years from its commencement, the religion had ſpread throughout Judea, had extended itſelf to Rome, and there had numbered a great multitude of converts, the original teachers and miſſionaries of the inſtitution could not have been idle; 2dly, that when the author of the undertaking was put to death as a malefactor for his attempt, the endeavours of his followers to eſtabliſh his religion, in the ſame country, amongſt the ſame people, and in the ſame age, could not but be attended with danger.

Suetonius, a writer contemporary with Tacitus, deſcribing the tranſactions of the ſame reign, uſes theſe words: "Affectiſupliciis Chriſtiani, genus hominum ſuperſtitionis novæ et maleficæ."[a] "The Chriſtians, a ſet of men, of a new and miſchievous (or magical) ſuperſtition, were puniſhed."

Since it is not mentioned *here* that the burning of the city was the pretence of the puniſhment of the Chriſtians, or that they were the Chriſtians of Rome who alone ſuffered, it is probable that Suetonius refers to ſome more general perſecution than the ſhort and occaſional one which Tacitus deſcribes.

Juvenal, a writer of the ſame age with the two former, and intending, as it ſhould ſeem, to commemorate the cruelties exerciſed under Nero's government, has the following lines:[b]

"Ponc Tigellinum tedâ lucebis in illâ
Quâ ſtantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant,
Et latum mediâſulcum[c] deducit arenâ."

"Deſcribe Tigellinus, (a creature of Nero's) and you ſhall ſuffer the ſame puniſhment with thoſe who ſtand burning in their own flame and ſmoke, their head being held up by a ſtake

[a] Suet. Nero, cap. 16.
[b] Sat. 1. ver. 155. [c] Forſan "deducis."

fixed to their chin, till they make a long ſtream of blood and melted ſulphur on the ground."

If this paſſage were conſidered by itſelf, the ſubject of the alluſion might be doubtful; but when connected with the teſtimony of Suetonius, as to the actual puniſhment of the Chriſtians by Nero; and with the account given by Tacitus of the *ſpecies* of puniſhment which they were made to undergo; I think it ſufficiently probable, that theſe were the executions to which the poet refers.

Theſe things, as hath already been obſerved, took place within thirty-one years after Chriſt's death, that is, according to the courſe of nature, in the life-time, probably, of ſome of the apoſtles, and certainly in the life-time of thoſe who were converted by the apoſtles, or who were converted in their time. If then the founder of the religion was put to death in the execution of his deſign; if the firſt race of converts to the religion, many of them, ſuffered the greateſt extremities for their profeſſion; it is hardly credible, that thoſe who came *between* the two, who were companions of the author of the inſtitution during his life, and the teachers and propagators of the inſtitution after his death, could go about their undertaking with eaſe and ſafety.

The teſtimony of the younger Pliny belongs to a later period; for although he was contemporary with Tacitus and Suetonius, yet his account does not, like theirs, go back to the tranſactions of Nero's reign, but is confined to the affairs of his own time. His celebrated letter to Trajan was written about ſeventy years after Chriſt's death; and the information to be drawn from it, ſo far as it is connected with our argument, relates principally to two points; firſt, to the number of Chriſtians in Bythynia and Pontus, which was ſo conſiderable as to induce the governor of theſe provinces to ſpeak of them in the following terms: "Multi, omnis ætatis, utriuſque ſexûs etiam —enim civitates tantum, ſed vicos etiam et agros, ſuperſtitionis iſtius contagio pervagata eſt." "There are many of every age and of both ſexes; nor has the contagion of this ſuperſtition ſeized cities only, but ſmaller towns alſo, and the open country." Great exertions muſt have been uſed by the preachers of Chriſtianity to produce this ſtate of things within this time. Secondly, to a point which hath been already noticed, and which I think of importance to be obſerved, namely, the ſufferings to which Chriſtians were expoſed, *without* any public perſecution

being denounced againſt them by ſovereign authority. For, from Pliny's doubt how he was to act, his ſilence concerning any ſubſiſting law upon the ſubject, his requeſting the emperor's reſcript, and the emperor, agreeably to his requeſt, propounding a rule for his direction, without reference to any prior rule, it may be inferred, that there was, at that time, no public edict againſt the Chriſtians in force. Yet from this ſame epiſtle of Pliny it appears "that accuſations, trials and examinations were, and had been, going on againſt them, in the provinces over which he preſided; that ſchedules were delivered by anonymous informers, containing the names of perſons who were ſuſpected of holding or of favouring the religion; that, in conſequence of theſe informations, many had been apprehended, of whom ſome boldly avowed their profeſſion, and died in the cauſe; others denied that they were Chriſtians; others acknowledging that they had once been Chriſtians, declared that they had long ceaſed to be ſuch." All which demonſtrates that the profeſſion of Chriſtianity was at that time (in that country at leaſt) attended with fear and danger; and yet this took place without any edict from the Roman ſovereign, commanding or authoriſing the perſecution of Chriſtians. This obſervation is farther confirmed by a reſcript of Adrian to Minucius Fundanus the pro-conſul of Aſia:[a] from which reſcript it appears, that the cuſtom of the people of Aſia was to proceed againſt the Chriſtians with tumult and uproar. This diſorderly practice, I ſay, is recognized in the edict, becauſe the emperor enjoins, that, for the future, if the Chriſtians were guilty they ſhould be legally brought to trial, and not be purſued by importunity and clamour.

Martial wrote a few years before the younger Pliny; and, as his manner was, made the ſufferings of the Chriſtians the ſubject of his ridicule.[b] Nothing however could ſhow the notoriety of the fact with more certainty than this does. Martial's teſtimony, as well indeed as Pliny's, goes alſo to another point,

[a] Lard. Heath. Teſt. v. II. p. 110.

[b] In matutina nuper ſpectatus arena
Mucius, impoſuit qui ſua membra focis,
Si patiens fortiſque tibi duruſque videtur,
Ab deritanæ pectora plebis habes;
Nam cum dicatur tunicâ præſente moleſtâ,
Ure* manum plus eſt dicere non facio.

* *Forſan* "*thure manum.*"

viz. that the deaths of these men were martyrdoms in the strictest sense, that is to say, were so voluntary, that it was in their power, at the time of pronouncing the sentence, to have averted the execution, by consenting to join in heathen sacrifices.

The constancy, and by consequence the sufferings, of the Christians of this period, is also referred to by Epictetus, who imputes their intrepidity to madness, or to a kind of fashion or habit; and about fifty years afterwards, by Marcus Aurelius, who ascribes it to obstinacy. "Is it possible (Epictetus asks) that a man may arrive at this temper, and become indifferent to those things, from madness or from habit, *as the Galileans*."[a] "Let this preparation of the mind (to die) arise from its own judgment, and not from obstinacy *like the Christians*."[b]

CHAP. III.

There is satisfactory evidence, that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

OF the primitive condition of Christianity, a distant only and general view can be acquired from heathen writers. It is in our own books that the detail and interior of the transaction must be sought for. And this is nothing different from what might be expected. Who would write the history of Christianity but a Christian? Who was likely to record the travels, sufferings, labours or successes of the apostles, but one of their own number, or of their followers? Now these books come up in their accounts to the full extent of the proposition which we maintain. We have four histories of Jesus Christ. We have a history taking up the narrative from his death, and carrying on an account of the propagation of the religion, and some of the most eminent persons engaged in it, for a space of nearly thirty years. We have, what some may think still more original, a collection of letters, written by certain principal agents in the business, upon the

[a] Epic. l. iv. c. 7.

[b] Marc. Aur. Med. l. xi. c. 3.

buſineſs, and in the midſt of their concern and connexion with it. And we have theſe writings ſeverally atteſting the point which we contend for, viz. the ſufferings of the witneſſes of the hiſtory, and atteſting it in every variety of form in which it can be conceived to appear; directly and indirectly, expreſsly and incidentally, by aſſertion, recital and alluſion, by narratives of facts, and by arguments and diſcourſes built upon theſe facts, either referring to them, or neceſſarily preſuppoſing them. —

I remark this variety, becauſe in examining ancient records, or indeed any ſpecies of teſtimony, it is, in my opinion, of the greateſt importance to attend to the information or grounds of argument which are *caſually* and *undeſignedly* diſcloſed; forasmuch as this ſpecies of proof is, of all others, the leaſt liable to be corrupted by fraud or miſrepreſentation.

I may be allowed therefore, in the inquiry which is now before us, to ſuggeſt ſome concluſions of this ſort as preparatory to more direct teſtimony.

1. Our books relate, that Jeſus Chriſt, the founder of the religion, was, in conſequence of his undertaking, put to death, as a malefactor, at Jeruſalem. This point at leaſt will be granted, becauſe it is no more than what Tacitus has recorded. They then proceed to tell us, that the religion was, *notwithſtanding*, ſet forth at the ſame city of Jeruſalem, propagated from thence throughout Judea, and afterwards preached in other parts of the Roman empire. Theſe points alſo are fully confirmed by Tacitus, who informs us, that the religion, after a ſhort check, broke out again in the country where it took its riſe; that it not only ſpread throughout Judea, but had reached Rome; and that it had there great multitudes of converts: and all this within thirty years after its commencement. Now theſe facts afford a ſtrong inference in behalf of the propoſition which we maintain. What could the diſciples of Chriſt expect for themſelves, when they ſaw their maſter put to death? Could they hope to eſcape the dangers in which he had periſhed? If they have perſecuted me, they will alſo perſecute you, was the warning of common ſenſe. With this example before their eyes, they could not be without a full ſenſe of the peril of their future enterpriſe.

2. Secondly, all the hiſtories agree in repreſenting Chriſt as foretelling the perſecution of his followers.

"Then ſhall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and ſhall kill you, and ye ſhall be hated of all nations for my name's ſake."[a]

[a] Matt. xxiv. 9.

"When affliction or perſecution ariſeth for the word's ſake, immediately they are offended."[a]

"They ſhall lay hands on you, and perſecute you, delivering you up to the ſynagogues, and into priſons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's ſake; and ye ſhall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks and friends, and ſome of you ſhall they cauſe to be put to death."[b]

"The time cometh, that he that killeth you will think that he doeth God ſervice. And theſe things will they do unto you, becauſe they have not known the Father nor me. But theſe things have I told you, that when the time ſhall come ye may remember that I told you of them."[c]

I am not entitled to argue from theſe paſſages, that Chriſt actually did foretel theſe events, and that they did accordingly come to paſs, becauſe that would be at once to aſſume the truth of the religion: but I am entitled to contend, that one ſide or other of the following disjunction is true, either that the evangeliſts have delivered what Chriſt really ſpoke, and that the event correſponded with the prediction; or that they put the prediction into Chriſt's mouth, becauſe, at the time of writing the hiſtory, the event had turned out ſo to be: for the only two remaining ſuppoſitions appear in the higheſt degree incredible, which are, either that Chriſt filled the minds of his followers with fears and apprehenſions, without any reaſon or authority for what he ſaid, and contrary to the truth of the caſe; or that, although Chriſt had never foretold any ſuch thing, and the event would have contradicted him if he had, yet hiſtorians who lived in the age when the event was known, falſely as well as officiouſly aſcribed theſe words to him.

3. Thirdly, theſe books abound with exhortations to patience, and with topics of comfort under diſtreſs.

"Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? Nay, in all theſe things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."[d]

"We are troubled on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; we are perplexed, but not in deſpair; perſecuted, but not forſaken;

[a] Mark iv. 17. ſee alſo x. 30.

[b] Luke xxi. 12—16. ſee alſo xi. 49.

[c] John xvi. 4. ſee alſo xv. 20. and xvi. 33.

[d] Rom. viii. 35, 37.

caſt down but not deſtroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jeſus, that the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in our body—knowing that he which raiſed up the Lord Jeſus ſhall raiſe us up alſo by Jeſus, and ſhall preſent us with you—for which cauſe we faint not, but, though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."[a]

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have ſpoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of ſuffering affliction, and of patience. Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have ſeen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."[b]

"Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilſt ye were made a gazing-ſtock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilſt ye became companions of them that were ſo uſed; for ye had compaſſion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the ſpoiling of your goods, knowing in yourſelves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring ſubſtance. Caſt not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompenſe of reward; for ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promiſe."[c]

"So that we ourſelves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your perſecutions and tribulations that ye endure. Which is a manifeſt token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom, for which ye alſo ſuffer."[d]

"We rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only ſo, but we glory in tribulations alſo; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."[e]

"Beloved, think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though ſome ſtrange thing happened unto you, but rejoice, inaſmuch as ye are partakers of Chriſt's ſufferings. Wherefore let them that ſuffer according to the

[a] 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17.
[b] James v. 10, 11.
[c] Heb. x. 32—36.
[d] 2 Theſſ. i. 1—5.
[e] Rom. v. 3. 4.

will of God, commit the keeping of their ſouls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."[a]

What could all theſe texts mean, if there was nothing in the circumſtances of the times which required patience, which called for the exerciſe of conſtancy and reſolution? Or will it be pretended that theſe exhortations (which, let it be obſerved, come not from one author, but from many) were put in, merely to induce a belief in after ages, that the firſt Chriſtians were expoſed to dangers which they were not expoſed to, or underwent ſufferings which they did not undergo. If theſe books belong to the age to which they lay claim, and in which age, whether genuine or ſpurious, they certainly did appear, this ſuppoſition cannot be maintained for a moment; becauſe I think it impoſſible to believe, that paſſages, which muſt be deemed not only unintelligible but falſe, by the perſons into whoſe hands the books upon their publication were to come, ſhould nevertheleſs be inſerted, for the purpoſe of producing an effect upon remote generations. In forgeries which do not appear till many ages after that to which they pretend to belong, it is poſſible that ſome contrivance of that ſort may take place; but in no others can it be attempted.

CHAP. IV.

There is ſatisfactory evidence, that many, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.

THE account of the treatment of the religion and of the exertions of its firſt preachers, as ſtated in our ſcriptures, not in a profeſſed hiſtory of perſecutions, or in the connected manner in which I am about to recite it, but diſperſedly and occaſionally, in the courſe of a mixed, general hiſtory, (which circumſtance alone negatives the ſuppoſition of any fraudulent deſign) is the following: "That the founder of Chriſtianity, from the commencement of his miniſtry to the time of his violent death, employed

[a] 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, 19.

himself wholly in publishing the institution in Judea and Galilee; that, in order to assist him in this purpose, he made choice, out of the number of his followers, of twelve persons, who might accompany him as he travelled from place to place; that, except a short absence upon a journey, in which he sent them, two by two, to announce his mission, and one of a few days, when they went before him to Jerusalem, these persons were statedly and constantly attending upon him; that they were with him at Jerusalem when he was apprehended and put to death; and that they were commissioned by him, when his own ministry was concluded, to publish his gospel, and collect disciples to it from all countries of the world." The account then proceeds to state, "That, a few days after his departure, these persons, with some of his relations, and some who had regularly frequented their society, assembled at Jerusalem; that, considering the office of preaching the religion as now devolved upon them, and one of their number having deserted the cause, and repenting of his perfidy, having destroyed himself, they proceeded to elect another into his place, and that they were careful to make their election out of the number of those who had accompanied their master from the first to the last, in order, as they alleged, that he might be a witness, together with themselves, of the principal facts which they were about to produce and relate concerning him;[a] that they began their work at Jerusalem, by publickly asserting that this Jesus, whom the rulers and inhabitants of that place had so lately crucified, was, in truth, the person in whom all their prophecies and long expectations terminated; that he had been sent amongst them by God; and that he was appointed by God the future judge of the human species; that all, who were solicitous to secure to themselves happiness after death, ought to receive him as such, and to make profession of their belief, by being baptized in his name."[b] The history goes on to relate, "that considerable numbers accepted this proposal, and that those who did so, formed amongst themselves a strict union and society;[c] that, the attention of the Jewish government being soon drawn upon them, two of the principal persons of the twelve, and who also had lived most intimately and constantly with the founder of the religion, were seized as they were discoursing to the people in the temple; that, after being kept all night in prison, they were

[a] Acts i. 21, 22. [b] Acts xi. [c] Acts v. 41.

brought the next day before an assembly, composed of the chief persons of the Jewish magistracy and priesthood; that this assembly, after some consultation, found nothing, at that time, better to be done towards suppressing the growth of the sect, than to threaten their prisoners with punishment, if they persisted; that these men, after expressing, in decent but firm language, the obligation under which they considered themselves to be, to declare what they knew, "to speak the things which they had seen and heard," returned from the council, and reported what had passed to their companions; that this report, whilst it apprised them of the danger of their situation and undertaking, had no other effect upon their conduct, than to produce in them a general resolution to persevere, and an earnest prayer to God to furnish them with assistance, and to inspire them with fortitude, proportioned to the increasing exigency of the service."[a] A very short time after this, we read "that all the twelve apostles were seized and cast into prison;[b] that, being brought a second time before the Jewish Sanhedrim, they were upbraided with their disobedience to the injunction which had been laid upon them, and beaten for their contumacy; that, being charged once more to desist, they were suffered to depart; that, however, they neither quitted Jerusalem, nor ceased from preaching, both daily in the temple, and from house to house;[c] and that the twelve considered themselves as so entirely and exclusively devoted to this office, that they now transferred, what may be called the temporal affairs of the society, to other hands."[d]

a Acts iv. b Acts v. 18. c Acts v.

d I do not know that it has ever been insinuated, that the Christian mission, in the hands of the apostles, was a scheme for making a fortune, or for getting money. But it may nevertheless be fit to remark upon this passage of their history, how perfectly free they appear to have been from any pecuniary or interested views whatever. The most tempting opportunity, which occurred, of making a gain of their converts, was by the custody and management of the public funds, when some of the richer members, intending to contribute their fortunes to the common support of the society, sold their possessions, and laid down the prices at the apostles' feet. Yet so insensible or undesirous were they of the advantage which that confidence afforded, that, we find, they very soon disposed of the trust, by putting it into the hands, not of nominees of their own, but of stewards formally elected for the purpose by the society at large.

We may add also, that excess of generosity, which cast private property into the public stock, was so far from being required by the a-

Hitherto the preachers of the new religion ſeem to have had the common people on their ſide; which is aſſigned as the reaſon, why the Jewiſh rulers did not, at this time, think it prudent to proceed to greater extremities. It was not long, however, before the enemies of the inſtitution found means to repreſent it to the people as tending to ſubvert their law, degrade their law-giver, and diſhonour their temple.[a] And theſe inſinuations were diſperſed with ſo much ſucceſs, as to induce the people to join with their ſuperiors in the ſtoning of a very active member of the new community.

The death of this man was the ſignal of a general perſecution; which raged at Jeruſalem with ſo much fury, as to drive moſt[b] of the new converts out of the place, except the twelve apoſtles. The converts, thus 'ſcattered abroad," preached the religion wherever they came; and their preaching was, in effect, the preaching of the *twelve*, for it was ſo far carried on in concert and correſpondence with *them*, that, when they heard of the ſucceſs of their emiſſaries in a particular country, they ſent two of their number to the place to complete and confirm the miſſion.

An event now took place of great importance in the future hiſtory of the religion. The perſecution[c] which had begun at Jeruſalem, followed the Chriſtians to other cities, in which the authority of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim over thoſe of their own nation was allowed to be exerciſed. A young man, who had ſignalized himſelf by his hoſtility to the profeſſion, and had procured a commiſſion from the council at Jeruſalem to ſeize any converted Jews whom he might find at Damaſcus, ſuddenly became a proſelyte to the religion which he was going about to extirpate. The new convert not only ſhared, upon this extraordinary change, the fate of his companions, but brought upon himſelf a double meaſure of enmity for the party which he had left. The

poſtles, or impoſed as a law of Chriſtianity, that Peter reminds Ananias that he had been guilty, in his behaviour, of an officious and voluntary prevarication; for whilſt, ſays he, thy eſtate remained unſold, "was it not thine own? and, after it was ſold, was it not in thine own power?"

[a] Acts vi. 12.

[b] Acts viii. 1. "And they were *all* ſcattered abroad;" but the term "all" is not, I think, to be taken ſtrictly, or as denoting more than the *generality*; in like manner as in Acts ix 35. "And *all* that dwelt in Lydda and Saron ſaw him, and turned to the Lord."

[c] Acts ix.

Jews at Damascus, upon his return to that city, watched the gates night and day with so much diligence, that he escaped from their hands only by being let down in a basket by the wall. Nor did he find himself in greater safety at Jerusalem, whither he immediately repaired. Attempts were there also soon set on foot to destroy him, from the danger of which he was preserved by being sent away to Cilicia, his native country.

For some reason, not mentioned, perhaps not known, but probably connected with the civil history of the Jews, or with some danger[a] which engrossed the public attention, an intermission about this time took place in the sufferings of the Christians. This happened, at the most only seven or eight, perhaps only three or four years after Christ's death; within which period, and notwithstanding that the late persecution occupied part of it, churches, or societies of believers, had been formed in all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; for we read that the churches in these countries "had now rest, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."[b] The original preachers of the religion did not remit their labours or activity during this season of quietness; for we find one, and he a very principal person amongst them, passing throughout all quarters. We find also those, who had been before expelled from Jerusalem by the persecution which raged there, travelling as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch:[c] and lastly, we find Jerusalem again the centre of the mission, the place whither the preachers returned from their several excursions, where they reported the conduct and effects of their ministry, where questions of public concern were canvassed and settled, from whence directions were sought, and teachers sent forth.

The time of this tranquillity did not, however, continue long. Herod Aggrippa, who had lately acceded to the government of Judea, "stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church."[d] He began his cruelty by beheading one of the twelve original apostles, a kinsman and constant companion of the founder of the religion. Perceiving that this execution gratified

[a] Dr. Lardner (in which he is followed also by Dr. Benson) ascribes this cessation of the persecution of the Christians to the attempt of Caligula to set up his own statue in the temple of Jerusalem, and to the consternation thereby excited in the minds of the Jewish people; which consternation for a season excluded every other contest.

[b] Acts ix. 31. [c] Acts xi. 19. [d] Acts xii. 1.

the Jews, he proceeded to ſeize, in order to put to death, another of the number; and him like the former, aſſociated with Chriſt during his life, and eminently active in the ſervice ſince his death. This man was, however, delivered from priſon, as the account ſtates,[a] miraculouſly, and made his eſcape from Jeruſalem.

Theſe things are related, not in the general terms under which, in giving the outlines of the hiſtory, we have here mentioned them, but with the utmoſt particularity of names, perſons, places, and circumſtances; and, what is deſerving of notice, without the ſmalleſt diſcoverable propenſity in the hiſtorian to magnify the fortitude, or exaggerate the ſufferings, of his party. When they fled for their lives, he tells us. When the churches had reſt, he remarks it. When the people took their part, he does not leave it without notice. When the apoſtles were carried a ſecond time before the Sanhedrim, he is careful to obſerve that they were brought without violence. When milder councils were ſuggeſted, he gives us the author of the advice, and the ſpeech which contained it. When, in conſequence of this advice, the rulers contented themſelves with threatening the apoſtles, and commanding them to be beaten with ſtripes without urging at that time the perſecution farther, the hiſtorian candidly and diſtinctly records their forbearance. When, therefore, in other inſtances, he ſtates heavier perſecutions or actual martyrdoms, it is reaſonable to believe that he ſtates them becauſe they were true; and not from any wiſh to aggravate, in his account, the ſufferings which Chriſtians ſuſtained, or to extol, more than it deſerved, their patience under them.

Our hiſtory now purſues a narrower path. Leaving the reſt of the apoſtles, and the original aſſociates of Chriſt, engaged in the propagation of the new faith, (and who, there is not the leaſt reaſon to believe, abated in their diligence or courage) the narrative proceeds with the ſeparate memoirs of that eminent teacher, whoſe extraordinary and ſudden converſion to the religion and correſponding change of conduct, had before been circumſtantially deſcribed. This perſon, in conjunction with another, who appeared amongſt the earlieſt members of the ſociety at Jeruſalem, and amongſt the immediate adherents[b] of the twelve apoſtles, ſet out from Antioch upon the expreſs buſineſs of carrying the new religion through the various provinces

a Acts xii. 3—17 b Acts iv. 36.

of the leſſer Aſia.[a] During this expedition, we find, that in almoſt every place to which they came, their perſons were inſulted, and their lives endangered. After being expelled from Antioch in Piſidia, they repaired to Iconium.[b] At Iconium an attempt was made to ſtone them. At Lyſtra, whither they fled from Iconium, one of them actually was ſtoned, and drawn out of the city for dead.[c] Theſe two men, though not themſelves original apoſtles, were acting in connexion and conjunction with the original apoſtles; for, after the completion of their journey, being ſent upon a particular commiſſion to Jeruſalem, they there related to the apoſtles[d] and elders the events and ſucceſs of their miniſtry, and were in return recommended by them to the churches, "as men who had hazarded their lives in the cauſe."

The treatment which they had experienced in their firſt progreſs did not deter them from preparing for a ſecond. Upon a diſpute, however, ariſing between them, but not connected with the common ſubject of their labours, they acted as wiſe and ſincere men would act; they did not retire in diſguſt from the ſervice in which they were engaged, but, each devoting his endeavours to the advancement of the religion, they parted from one another, and ſet forwards upon ſeparate routs. The hiſtory goes along with one of them; and the ſecond enterpriſe to him was attended with the ſame dangers and perſecutions as both had met with in the firſt. The apoſtle's travels hitherto had been confined to Aſia. He now croſſes, for the firſt time, the Ægean Sea, and carries with him, amongſt others, the perſon whoſe accounts ſupply the information we are ſtating.[e] The firſt place in Greece at which he appears to have ſtopped was Philippi in Macedonia. Here himſelf and one of his companions were cruelly whipped, caſt into priſon, and kept there under the moſt rigorous cuſtody, being thruſt, whilſt yet ſmarting with their wounds, into the inner dungeon, and their feet made faſt in the ſtocks.[f] Notwithſtanding this unequivocal ſpecimen of the uſage they had to look for in that country, they went forward in the execution of their errand. After paſſing through Amphipolis and Appolonia, they came to Theſſalonica; in which city the houſe in which they lodged was aſſailed by a party of their enemies, in order to bring them out to the popu-

[a] Acts xiii. 2. [b] Acts xiii. 50. [c] Acts xiv. 5.
[d] Acts xv. 12—26. [e] Acts xvi. 11. [f] V. 23, 24, 33.

lace. And when, fortunately for their preſervation, they were not found at home, the maſter of the houſe was dragged before the magiſtrate for admitting them within his doors.[a] Their reception at the next city was ſomething better; but neither here had they continued long before their turbulent adverſaries, the Jews, excited againſt them ſuch commotions amongſt the inhabitants, as obliged the apoſtle to make his eſcape by a private journey to Athens.[b] The extremity of the progreſs was Corinth. His abode in this city, for ſome time, ſeems to have been without moleſtation. At length, however, the Jews found means to ſtir up an inſurrection againſt him, and to bring him before the tribunal of the Roman preſident.[c] It was to the contempt which that magiſtrate entertained for the Jews and their controverſies, of which he accounted Chriſtianity to be one, that our apoſtle owed his deliverance.[d]

This indefatigable teacher, after leaving Corinth, returned by Epheſus into Syria; and again viſited Jeruſalem, and the ſociety of Chriſtians in that city, which, as hath been repeatedly obſerved, ſtill continued the centre of the miſſion.[e] It ſuited not, however, with the activity of his zeal to remain long at Jeruſalem. We find him going from thence to Antioch, and, after ſome ſtay there, traverſing once more the northern provinces of Aſia Minor.[f] This progreſs ended at Epheſus; in which city the apoſtle continued in the daily exerciſe of his miniſtry two years, and until his ſucceſs, at length, excited the apprehenſions of thoſe who were intereſted in the ſupport of the national worſhip. Their clamour produced a tumult, in which he had nearly loſt his life.[g] Undiſmayed, however, by the dangers to which he ſaw himſelf expoſed, he was driven from Epheſus only to renew his labours in Greece.[h] After paſſing over Macedonia, he thence proceeded to his former ſtation at Corinth.[i] When he had formed his deſign of returning by a direct courſe from Corinth into Syria, he was compelled by a conſpiracy of the Jews, who were prepared to intercept him on his way, to trace back his ſteps through Macedonia to Philippi, and from thence to take ſhipping into Aſia. Along the coaſt of Aſia he purſued his voyage with all the expedition he could command, in order to reach Jeruſalem againſt the feaſt of Pentecoſt.[k] His reception

[a] Acts xvii. 1—5. [b] V. 13. [c] Acts xviii. 12.
[d] Acts xviii. 15. [e] V. 22. [f] V. 23. [g] Acts xix. 1, 9, 10.
[h] V. 29, 31. [i] Acts xix 1. [k] Acts xix. 16.

at Jeruſalem was of a piece with the uſage he had experienced from the Jews in other places. He had been only a few days in that city when the populace, inſtigated by ſome of his old opponents in Aſia who attended this feaſt, ſeized him in the temple, forced him out of it, and were ready immediately to have deſtroyed him, had not the ſudden preſence of the Roman guard reſcued him out of their hands.[a] The officer, however, who had thus ſeaſonably interpoſed, acted from his care of the public peace, with the preſervation of which he was charged, and not from any favour to the apoſtle, or indeed any diſpoſition to exerciſe either juſtice or humanity towards him; for he had no ſooner ſecured his perſon in the fortreſs, than he was proceeding to examine him by torture.[b]

From this time to the concluſion of the hiſtory the apoſtle remains in public cuſtody of the Roman government. After eſcaping aſſaſſination by a fortunate diſcovery of the plot, and delivering himſelf from the influence of his enemies by an appeal to the audience of the emperor,[c] he was ſent, but not until he had ſuffered two years' impriſonment, to Rome.[d] He reached Italy after a tedious voyage, and after encountering in his paſſage the perils of a deſperate ſhipwreck.[e] But although ſtill a priſoner, and his fate ſtill depending, neither the various and long continued ſufferings which he had undergone, nor the danger of his preſent ſituation, deterred him from perſiſting in preaching the religion; for the hiſtorian cloſes the account by telling us, that, for two years, he received all that came unto him in his own hired houſe, where he was permitted to dwell with a ſoldier that guarded him, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching thoſe things which concern the Lord Jeſus Chriſt with all confidence."

Now the hiſtorian, from whom we have drawn this account, in the part of his narrative which relates to St. Paul, is ſupported by the ſtrongeſt corroborating teſtimony that a hiſtory can receive. We are in poſſeſſion of letters written by St. Paul himſelf upon the ſubject of his miniſtry, and either written during the period which the hiſtory compriſes, or, if written afterwards, reciting and referring to the tranſactions of that period. Theſe letters, without borrowing from the hiſtory,

[a] Acts xxi. 27—33. [b] Acts xxii. 12, 24. [c] Acts xxv. 9, 11.
[d] Acts xxiv. 27. [e] Acts xvii.

or the hiſtory from them, unintentionally confirm the account which the hiſtory delivers in a great variety of particulars. What belongs to our preſent purpoſe is the deſcription exhibited of the apoſtle's ſufferings: And the repreſentation given in the hiſtory, of the dangers and diſtreſſes which he underwent, not only agrees, in general, with the language which he himſelf uſes, whenever he ſpeaks of his life or miniſtry, but is alſo, in many inſtances, atteſted by a ſpecific correſpondency of time, place, and order of events. If the hiſtorian relates that at Philippi the apoſtle "was beaten with many ſtripes, caſt into priſon, and there treated with rigour and indignity,"[a] we find him, in a letter[b] to a neighbouring church, reminding his converts, that "after he had ſuffered before, and was ſhamefully entreated at Philippi, he was bold, nevertheleſs, to ſpeak unto them (to whoſe city he next came) the goſpel of God." If the hiſtory relate,[c] that, at Theſſalonica, the houſe in which the apoſtle was lodged, when he firſt came to that place, was aſſaulted by the populace, and the maſter of it dragged before the magiſtrate for admitting ſuch a gueſt within his doors, the apoſtle, in his letters[d] to the Chriſtians of Theſſalonica, calls to their remembrance, "how they had received the goſpel in much affliction." If the hiſtory deliver an account of an inſurrection at Epheſus, which had nearly coſt the apoſtle his life, we have the apoſtle himſelf, in a letter written a ſhort time after his departure from that city, deſcribing his deſpair, and returning thanks for his deliverance.[e] If the hiſtory inform us, that the apoſtle was expelled from Antioch in Piſidia, attempted to be ſtoned at Iconium, and actually ſtoned at Lyſtra, there is preſerved a letter from him to a favourite convert, whom, as the ſame hiſtory tells us, he firſt met with in theſe parts; in which letter he appeals to that diſciple's knowledge "of the perſecutions which befel him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lyſtra."[f] If the hiſtory make the apoſtle, in his ſpeech to the Epheſian elders, remind them, as one proof of the diſintereſtedneſs of his views, that, to their knowledge, he had ſupplied his own and the neceſſities of his companions by perſonal labour,[g] we find the ſame apoſtle, in a letter written during his reſidence at Epheſus, aſſerting of

a Acts xvi. 24. b 1 Theſſ. ii. 2. c Acts xvii. 57.
d 1 Theſſ. i. 6. e Acts xix. 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.
f Acts xiii. 50.—xix. 5, 19. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11. g Acts xx. 34.

himself, "that even to that hour he laboured, working with his own hands."[a]

These coincidences, together with many relative to other parts of the apostle's history, and *all* drawn from independent sources, not only confirm the truth of the account, in the particular points as to which they are observed, but add much to the credit of the narrative in all its parts; and support the author's profession of being a contemporary of the person whose history he writes, and, throughout a material portion of his narrative, a companion.

What the epistles of the apostles declare of the suffering state of Christianity, the writings which remain of their companions, and immediate followers, expressly confirm.

Clement, who is honourably mentioned by St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians,[b] hath left us his attestation to this point in the following words: "Let us take (says he) the examples of our own age. Through zeal and envy the most faithful and righteous pillars of the church have been persecuted even to the most grievous deaths. Let us set before our eyes *the holy apostles*. Peter, by unjust envy, underwent, not one or two, but many sufferings; till at last, being martyred, he went to the place of glory that was due unto him. For the same cause did Paul, in like manner, receive the reward of his patience. Seven times he was in bonds; he was whipped, was stoned; he preached both in the east and in the west; leaving behind him the glorious report of his faith: and so having taught the whole world righteousness, and for that end travelled even unto the utmost bounds of the west, he at last suffered martyrdom by the command of the governors, and departed out of the world, and went unto his holy place, being become a most eminent pattern of patience unto all ages. To these holy apostles were joined a very great number of others, who having through envy undergone, in like manner, many pains and torments, have left a glorious example to us. For this, not only men, but women, have been persecuted; and having suffered very grievous and cruel punishments, have finished the course of their faith with firmness."[c]

Hermas, saluted by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, in a piece very little connected with historical recitals, thus speaks: "Such as have believed and suffered death for the name of

[a] 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12. [b] Acts ix. 3.

[c] Clem. ad Cor. c. v. vi. A. B. Wake's transl.

Chriſt, and have endured with a ready mind, and have given up their lives with all their hearts."[a]

Polycarp, the diſciple of John, though all that remains of his works be a very ſhort epiſtle, has not left this ſubject unnoticed. "I exhort (ſays he) all of you, that ye obey the word of righteouſneſs, and exerciſe all patience, which ye have ſeen ſet forth before your eyes, not only in the bleſſed Ignatius, and Zorimus, and Rufus, but in others among yourſelves, and in *Paul himſelf and the reſt of the apoſtles;* being confident in this, that all theſe have not run in vain, but in faith and righteouſneſs; and are gone to the place that was due to them from the Lord, with whom alſo they ſuffered. For they loved not this preſent world, but him who died and was raiſed again by God for us."[b]

Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, recognizes the ſame topic, briefly indeed, but poſitively and preciſely. "For this cauſe (i. e. for having felt and handled Chriſt's body after his reſurrection, and being convinced, as Ignatius expreſſes it, both by his fleſh and ſpirit) they (i. e. Peter, and thoſe who were preſent with Peter at Chriſt's appearance) deſpiſed death, and were found to be above it."[c]

Would the reader know what a perſecution in theſe days was, I would refer him to a circular letter, written by the church of Smyrna ſoon after the death of Polycarp, who it will be remembered, had lived with St. John; and which letter is entitled a relation of that biſhop's martyrdom. "The ſufferings (ſay they) of all the other martyrs were bleſſed and generous, which they underwent according to the will of God. For ſo it becomes us, who are more religious than others, to aſcribe the power and ordering of all things unto him. And indeed who can chooſe but admire the greatneſs of their minds, and that admirable patience and love of their Maſter, which then appeared in them? who, when they were ſo flayed with whipping, that the frame and ſtructure of their bodies were laid open to their very inward veins and arteries, nevertheleſs endured it. In like manner, thoſe who were condemned to the beaſts, and kept a long time in priſon, underwent many cruel torments, being forced to lie upon ſharp ſpikes laid under their bodies, and tormented with divers other ſorts of puniſhments; that ſo, if it were poſſible, the tyrant, by the length of their ſufferings, might have brought them to deny Chriſt."[d]

[a] Shepherd of Hermas, c. xxviii. [b] Pol. ad c. ix.
[c] 19 Eph. Smyr. c. iii. [d] Rel. Mor. Pol. c. ii.

CHAP. V.

There is satisfactory evidence, that many, professing to have been original witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

UPON the history, of which the last chapter contains an abstract, there are a few observations which it may be proper to make, by way of applying its testimony to the particular propositions for which we contend.

I. Although our scripture history leaves the general account of the apostles in an early part of the narrative, and proceeds with the separate account of one particular apostle, yet the information which it delivers so far extends to the rest, as it shows *the nature of the service*. When we see one apostle suffering persecution in the discharge of his commission, we shall not believe, without evidence, that the same office could, at the same time, be attended with ease and safety to others. And this fair and reasonable inference is confirmed by the direct attestation of the letters, to which we have so often referred. The writer of these letters not only alludes, in numerous passages, to his own sufferings, but speaks of the rest of the apostles as enduring like sufferings with himself. "I think that God hath set forth *us the apostles* last, as it were, appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men—even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffetted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things unto this day."[a] Add to which, that in the short account that is given of the other apostles, in the former part of the history, and within the short period which that account comprises, we find, first, two of them seized, imprisoned, brought before the Sanhedrim, and threatened with further punishment;[b] then, the whole number imprisoned and beaten:[c] soon afterwards, one of their adherents stoned to death, and so hot a persecution raised against

[a] 1 Cor. iv et seq. [b] Acts iv. 3, 21. [c] Acts v. 18, 40.

the ſect, as to drive moſt of them out of the place; a ſhort time only ſucceeding, before one of the twelve was beheaded, and another ſentenced to the ſame fate; and all this paſſing in the ſingle city of Jeruſalem, and within ten years after the founder's death, and the commencement of the inſtitution.

II. Secondly; we take no credit at preſent for the miraculous part of the narrative, nor do we inſiſt upon the correctneſs of ſingle paſſages of it. If the whole ſtory be not a novel, a romance; the whole action a dream; if Peter, and James and Paul, and the reſt of the apoſtles, mentioned in the account, be not all imaginary perſons; if their letters be not all forgeries; and, what is more, forgeries of names and characters which never exiſted; then is there evidence in our hands ſufficient to ſupport the only fact we contend for (and which I repeat again, is, in itſelf, highly probable) that the original followers of Jeſus Chriſt exerted great endeavours to propagate his religion, and underwent great labours, dangers, and ſufferings, in conſequence of their undertaking.

III. The general reality of the apoſtolic hiſtory is ſtrongly confirmed by the conſideration, that it, in truth, does no more than aſſign adequate cauſes for effects which certainly were produced, and deſcribe conſequences naturally reſulting from ſituations which certainly exiſted. The *effects* were certainly there, of which this hiſtory ſets forth the cauſe, and origin, and progreſs. It is acknowledged on all hands, becauſe it is recorded by other teſtimony than that of the Chriſtians themſelves, that the religion began to prevail at that time, and in that country. It is very difficult to conceive how it could begin, or prevail at all, without the exertions of the founder and his followers in propagating the new perſuaſion. The hiſtory now in our hands deſcribes theſe exertions, the perſons employed, the means and endeavours made uſe of, and the labours undertaken in the proſecution of this purpoſe. Again; the treatment which the hiſtory deſcribes the firſt propagators of the religion to have experienced, was no other than what naturally reſulted from the ſituation in which they were confeſſedly placed. It is admitted that the religion was adverſe, in a great degree, to the reigning opinions, and to the hopes and wiſhes of the nation to which it was firſt introduced; and that it overthrew, ſo far as it was received, the eſtabliſhed theology and worſhip of every other country. We cannot feel much reluctance in believing that, when the meſſengers of ſuch a ſyſtem went about not only pub-

liſhing their opinions, but collecting proſelytes, and forming regular ſocieties of proſelytes, they ſhould meet with oppoſition in their attempts, or that this oppoſition ſhould ſometimes proceed to fatal extremities. Our hiſtory details examples of this oppoſition, and of the ſufferings and dangers which the emiſſaries of the religion underwent, perfectly agreeable to what might reaſonably be expected, from the nature of their undertaking, compared with the character of the age and country in which it was carried on.

IV. Fourthly; the records before us ſupply evidence of what formed another member of our general propoſition, and what, as hath already been obſerved, is highly probable, and almoſt a neceſſary conſequence of their new profeſſion, viz. that, together with activity and courage in propagating the religion, the primitive followers of Jeſus aſſumed, upon their converſion, a new and peculiar courſe of private life. Immediately after their Maſter was withdrawn from them, we hear of their "continuing with one accord in prayer and ſupplication,"[a] of their "continuing daily with one accord in the temple,"[b] of "many being gathered together praying."[c] We know what ſtrict injunctions were laid upon the converts by their teachers: wherever they came, the firſt word of their preaching was "repent." We know that theſe injunctions obliged them to refrain from many ſpecies of licentiouſneſs, which were not, at that time, reputed criminal. We know the rules of purity, and the maxims of benevolence, which Chriſtians read in their books; concerning which rules, it is enough to obſerve, that, if they were, I will not ſay, completely obeyed, but in any degree regarded, they would produce a ſyſtem of conduct, and, what is more difficult to preſerve, a diſpoſition of mind, and a regulation of affections, different from any thing to which they had hitherto been accuſtomed, and different from what they would ſee in others. The change and diſtinction of manners, which reſulted from their new character, is perpetually referred to in the letters of their teachers. "And you hath he quickened, who *were* dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, wherein in *times paſt* ye walked, according to the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience; among whom alſo we all had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts of our fleſh, fulfilling

[a] Acts i. 14. [b] Acts ii. 49. [c] Acts xii. 12.

the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."[a] "For the *time past of our lives* may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, *wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot.*"[b] St. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, after enumerating, as his manner was, a catalogue of vicious characters, adds, "Such *were* some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified."[c] In like manner, and alluding to the same change of practices and sentiment, he asks the Roman Christians what fruit they had in those things whereof they are *now* ashamed?"[d] The phrases which the same writer employs to describe the moral condition of Christians, compared with their condition before they became Christians, such as "newness of life," being "freed from sin," being "dead to sin," "the destruction of the body of sin, that, *for the future*, they should not serve sin;" "children of light and of the day," as opposed to "children of darkness and of night," "not sleeping as others," imply, at least, a new system of obligation, and, probably, a new series of conduct, commencing with their conversion.

The testimony which Pliny bears to the behaviour of the new sect in his time, and which testimony comes not more than fifty years after that of St. Paul, is very applicable to the subject under consideration. The character which this writer gives of the Christians of that age, and which was drawn from a pretty accurate inquiry, because he considered their moral principles as the point in which the magistrate was interested, is as follows:—He tells the emperor, "that some of those who had relinquished the society, or who, to save themselves, pretended that they had relinquished it, affirmed that they were wont to meet together, on a stated day, before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as a God; and to bind themselves, by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but that they would not be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; that they would never falsify their word, nor deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it." This proves that a morality, more pure and strict than was ordinary, prevailed at that time in Christian societies.

[a] Eph. ii. 1—3. see also Tit. iii. 3. [b] 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.
[c] 1 Cor. vi. 11. [d] Rom vi. 21.

And to me it appears that we are authorised to carry this testimony back to the age of the apostles, because it is not probable that the immediate hearers and disciples of Christ were more relaxed than their successors in Pliny's time, or the missionaries of the religion than those whom they taught.

CHAP. VI.

There is satisfactory evidence, that many, professing to have been original witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

WHEN we consider, first, the prevalency of religion at this hour; secondly, the only credible account which can be given of its origin, viz. the activity of the founder and his associates; thirdly, the opposition which that activity must naturally have excited; fourthly, the fate of the founder of the religion, attested by heathen writers as well as our own; fifthly, the testimony of the same writers to the sufferings of the Christians, either contemporary with, or immediately succeeding, the original settlers of the institution; sixthly, predictions of the sufferings of his followers ascribed to the founder of the religion, which ascription alone proves, either that such predictions were delivered and fulfilled, or that the writers of Christ's life were induced by the event to attribute such predictions to him; seventhly, letters now in our possession, written by some of the principal agents in the transaction, and referring expressly to extreme labours, dangers, and sufferings, sustained by themselves and their companions; lastly, a history, purporting to be written by a fellow-traveller of one of the new teachers, and, by its unsophisticated correspondency with letters of that person still extant, proving itself to be written by some one well acquainted with the subject of the narrative, which history contains accounts of travels, persecutions, and martyrdoms, answering to what the former reasons lead us to expect: when we lay together these considerations, which, taken separately, are, I think, correctly such as I have stated them in the preceding chapters, there cannot much doubt remain upon our minds, but that a number of persons at that

time appeared in the world, publickly advancing an extraordinary ſtory, and, for the ſake of propagating the belief of that ſtory, voluntarily incurring great perſonal dangers, traverſing ſeas and kingdoms, exerting great induſtry, and ſuſtaining great extremities of ill uſage and perſecution. It is alſo proved that the ſame perſons, in conſequence of their perſuaſion, or pretended perſuaſion of the truth of what they aſſerted, entered upon a courſe of life in many reſpects new and ſingular.

From the clear and acknowledged parts of the caſe, I think it to be likewiſe in the higheſt degree probable, that the ſtory, for which theſe perſons voluntarily expoſed themſelves to the fatigues and hardſhips which they endured, was a *miraculous* ſtory; I mean that they pretended to miraculous evidence of ſome kind or other. They had nothing elſe to ſtand upon. The deſignation of the perſon, that is to ſay, that Jeſus of Nazareth, rather than any other perſon, was the Meſſiah, and as ſuch, the ſubject of their miniſtry, could only be founded upon ſupernatural tokens attributed to him. Here were no victories, no conqueſts, no revolutions, no ſurpriſing elevation of fortune, no achievements of valour, of ſtrength, or of policy, to appeal to; no diſcoveries in any art or ſcience, no great efforts of genius or learning to produce. A Galilean peaſant was announced to the world as a divine lawgiver. A young man of mean condition, of a private and ſimple life, and who had wrought no deliverance for the Jewiſh nation, was declared to be their Meſſiah. This, without aſcribing to him at the ſame time ſome proofs of his miſſion (and what other but ſupernatural proofs could there be?) was too abſurd a claim to be either imagined, or attempted, or credited. In whatever degree, or in whatever part, the religion was *argumentative*, when it came to the queſtion, Is the carpenter's ſon of Nazareth the perſon whom we are to receive and obey? there was nothing but the miracles attributed to him, by which his pretenſions could be maintained for a moment. Every controverſy and every queſtion muſt preſuppoſe theſe; for however ſuch controverſies, when they did ariſe might, and naturally would be diſcuſſed upon their own grounds of argumentation, without citing the miraculous evidence which had been aſſerted to attend the founder of the religion (which would have been to enter upon another, and a more general, queſtion) yet we are to bear in mind, that without previouſly ſuppoſing the exiſtence, or the pretence, of ſuch evidence, there could have been no place for the diſcuſſion or the argument at

all. Thus, for example, whether the prophecies, which the Jews interpreted to belong to the Meſſiah were or were not, applicable to the hiſtory of Jeſus of Nazareth, was a natural ſubject of debate in thoſe times; and the debate would proceed, without recurring at every turn to his miracles, becauſe it ſet out with ſuppoſing theſe; inaſmuch as without miraculous marks and tokens (real or pretended) or without ſome ſuch great change effected by his means in the public condition of the country, as might have ſatisfied the then received interpretation of theſe prophecies, I do not ſee how the queſtion could ever have been entertained. Apollos, we read, "mightily convinced the Jews, ſhowing by the ſcriptures that Jeſus was Chriſt;"[a] but unleſs Jeſus had exhibited ſome diſtinction of his perſon, ſome proof of ſupernatural power, the argument from the old ſcriptures could have had no place. It had nothing to attach upon. A young man calling himſelf the Son of God, gathering a crowd about him, and delivering to them lectures of morality, could not have excited ſo much as a doubt amongſt the Jews whether he was the object in whom a long ſeries of ancient prophecies terminated, from the completion of which they had formed ſuch magnificent expectations, and expectations of a nature ſo oppoſite to what appeared; I mean, no ſuch doubt could exiſt when they had the whole caſe before them; when they ſaw him put to death for his officiouſneſs, and when by his death the evidence concerning him was cloſed. Again, the *effect* of the Meſſiah's coming, ſuppoſing Jeſus to have been him, upon Jews, upon Gentiles, upon their relation to each other, upon their acceptance with God, upon their duties and their expectations; his nature, authority, office and agency; were likely to become ſubjects of much conſideration with the early votaries of the religion, and to occupy their attention and writings. I ſhould not, however, expect, that in theſe diſquiſitions, whether preſerved in the form of letters, ſpeeches, or ſet treatiſes, frequent or very direct mention of his miracles would occur. Still miraculous evidence lay at the bottom of the argument. In the *primary* queſtion, miraculous pretenſions, and miraculous pretenſions alone, were what they had to rely upon.

That the original ſtory was miraculous, is very fairly alſo inferred from the miraculous powers which were laid claim to by the Chriſtians of ſucceeding ages. If the accounts of theſe miracles be true, it was a continuation of the ſame powers; if they

[a] Acts xviii. 28.

be falſe, it was an *imitation*, I will not ſay, of what had been wrought, but of what had been reported to have been wrought by thoſe who preceded them. That imitation ſhould follow reality; fiction be grafted upon truth; that if miracles were performed at firſt, miracles ſhould be pretended afterwards, agrees ſo well with the ordinary courſe of human affairs, that we can have no great difficulty in believing it. The contrary ſuppoſition is very improbable, namely, that miracles ſhould be pretended to by the followers of the apoſtles and firſt emiſſaries of the religion, when none were pretended to, either in their own perſons or that of their maſter, by theſe apoſtles and emiſſaries themſelves.

CHAP. VII.

There is ſatisfactory evidence, that many, profeſſing to have been original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.

IT once then being proved, that the firſt propagators of the Chriſtian inſtitution did exert great activity, and ſubject themſelves to great dangers and ſufferings in conſequence and for the ſake of an extraordinary, and I think we may ſay, of a miraculous ſtory of ſome kind or other; the next great queſtion is, whether the account, which our ſcriptures contain, be that ſtory; that which theſe men delivered, and for which they acted and ſuffered as they did.

This queſtion is, in effect, no other than whether the ſtory, which Chriſtians have *now*, be the ſtory which Chriſtians had *then*; and of this the following proofs may be deduced from general conſiderations, and from conſiderations prior to any inquiry into the particular reaſons and teſtimonies by which the authority of our hiſtories is ſupported.

In the firſt place, there exiſts no trace or veſtige of any other ſtory. It is not, like the death of Cyrus the great, a competition between oppoſite accounts, or between the credit of different hiſtorians. There is not a document, or ſcrap of account, either contemporary with the commencement of Chriſtianity, or extant within many ages after that commencement, which

aſſigns a hiſtory ſubſtantially different from ours. The remote, brief, and incidental notices of the affair, which are found in heathen writers ſo far as they do go, go along with us. They bear teſtimony to theſe facts; that the inſtitution originated from Jeſus; that the founder was put to death, as a malefactor, at Jeruſalem, by the authority of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate; that the religion nevertheleſs ſpread in that city, and throughout Judea; and that it was propagated from thence to diſtant countries; that the converts were numerous; that they ſuffered great hardſhips and injuries for their profeſſion; and that all this took place in the age of the world which our books have aſſigned. They go on farther, to deſcribe the *manners* of Chriſtians in terms perfectly conformable to the accounts extant in our books; that they were wont to aſſemble on a certain day; that they ſung hymns to Chriſt as to a God; that they bound themſelves by an oath not to commit any crime, but to abſtain from theft and adultery, to adhere ſtrictly to their promiſes, and not to deny money depoſited in their hands;[a] that they worſhipped him who was crucified in Paleſtine; that this, their firſt lawgiver, had taught them that they were all brethren; that they had a great contempt for the things of this world, and looked upon them as common; that they flew to one another's relief; that they cheriſhed ſtrong hopes of immortality; that they deſpiſed death, and ſurrendered themſelves to ſufferings."[b] This is the account of writers who viewed the ſubject at a great diſtance, who were uninformed and unintereſted about it. It bears the characters of ſuch an account upon

[a] Vide Pliny's Letter. Bonnet, in his lively way of expreſſing himſelf, ſays—"Comparing Pliny's Letter with the account in the Acts, it ſeems to me that I had not taken up another author, but that I was ſtill reading the hiſtorian of that extraordinary ſociety." This is ſtrong; but there is undoubtedly an affinity, and all the affinity that could be expected.

[b] "It is incredible what expedition they uſe when any of their friends are known to be in trouble. In a word, they ſpare nothing upon ſuch an occaſion; for theſe miſerable men have no doubt they ſhall be immortal, and live forever, therefore they contemn death, and many ſurrender themſelves to ſufferings. Moreover, their firſt lawgiver has taught them that they are all brethren, when once they have turned and renounced the gods of the Greeks, and worſhip the maſter of theirs who was crucified, and engage to live according to his laws. They have alſo a ſovereign contempt for all the things of this world, and look upon them as common." Lucian de Morte Peregrini, t. 1. p. 565, ed. Græv.

the face of it, because it describes effects, namely, the appearance in the world of a new religion, and the conversion of great multitudes to it, without descending, in the smallest degree, to the detail of the transaction upon which it was founded, the interior of the institution, the evidence or arguments offered by those who drew over others to it. Yet still here is no contradiction of our story, no other or different story set up against it, but so far a confirmation of it, as that, in the general points upon which the heathen account touches, it agrees with that which we find in our own books.

The same may be observed of the very few Jewish writers, of that and the adjoining period, which have come down to us. Whatever they omit, or whatever difficulties we may find in explaining the omission, they advance no other history of the transaction than that which we acknowledge. Josephus, who wrote his antiquities, or history of the Jews, about sixty years after the commencement of Christianity, in a passage generally admitted as genuine, makes mention of John under the name of John the Baptist; that he was a preacher of virtue; that he baptized his proselytes; that he was well received by the people; that he was imprisoned and put to death by Herod; and that Herod lived in a criminal cohabitation with Herodias, his brother's wife.[a] In another passage, allowed by many, although not without considerable question being moved about it, we hear of "James, the brother of him who was called Jesus, and of his being put to death."[b] In a third passage, extant in every copy that remains of Josephus's history, but the authenticity of which has nevertheless been long disputed, we have an explicit testimony to the substance of our history in these words:—"At that time lived Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man, for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. This was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the cross, they, who before had conceived an affection for him, did not cease to adhere to him; for on the third day he appeared to them alive again, the divine prophets having foretold these and many wonderful things concerning him. And the sect of the Christians, so called

[a] Antiq. l. xviii. cap. v. sect. 1, 2.

[b] Antiq. l. xx. cap. ix. sect. 1.

from him, subsists to this time."[a] Whatever becomes of the controversy concerning the genuineness of this passage; whether Josephus go the whole length of our history, which, if the passage be sincere, he does; or whether he proceed only a very little way with us, which, if the passage be rejected, we confess to be the case; still what we asserted is true, that he gives no other or different history of the subject from ours, no other or different account of the original of the institution. And I think also that it may with great reason be contended, either that the passage is genuine, or that the silence of Josephus was designed. For, although we should lay aside the authority of our own books entirely, yet when Tacitus, who wrote not twenty, perhaps not ten, years after Josephus, in his account of a period in which Josephus was near thirty years of age, tells us, that a vast multitude of Christians were condemned at Rome; that they derived their denomination from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death, as a criminal, by the procurator Pontius Pilate; that the superstition had spread not only over Judea, the source of the evil, but had reached Rome also: when Seutonius, an historian contemporary with Tacitus, relates, that in the time of Claudius, the Jews were making disturbances at Rome, Chrestus being their leader; and that, during the reign of Nero, the Christians were punished; under both which emperors Josephus lived: when Pliny, who wrote his celebrated epistle not more than thirty years after the publication of Josephus's history, found the Christians in such numbers in the province of Bythynia as to draw from him a complaint, that the contagion had seized cities, towns and villages, and had so seized them as to produce a general desertion of the public rites; and when, as hath already been observed, there is no reason for imagining that the Christians were more numerous in Bythynia than in many other parts of the Roman empire: it cannot, I should suppose, after this, be believed, that the religion, and the transaction upon which it was founded, were too obscure to engage the attention of Josephus, or to obtain a place in his history. Perhaps he did not know how to represent the business, and disposed of his difficulties by passing it over in silence. Eusebius wrote the life of Constantine, yet omits entirely the most remarkable circumstance in that life, the death of his son Crispus; undoubtedly for the reason here

[a] Antiq. l. xviii. cap. iii. sect. 3.

given. The reſerve of Joſephus upon the ſubject of Chriſtianity appears alſo in his paſſing over the baniſhment of the Jews by Claudius, which Suetonius, we have ſeen, has recorded with an expreſs reference to Chriſt. This is at leaſt as remarkable as his ſilence about the infants of Bethlehem.[a] Be, however, the fact, or the cauſe of the omiſſion in Joſephus,[b] what it may, no other or different hiſtory of the ſubject has been given by him, or is pretended to have been given.

But further, the whole ſeries of Chriſtian writers, from the firſt age of the inſtitution down to the preſent, in their diſcuſſions, apologies, arguments, and controverſies, proceed upon the general ſtory which our ſcriptures contain, and upon no other. The main facts, the principal agents, are alike in all. This argument will appear to be of great force when it is known that we are able to trace back the ſeries of writers to a contact with the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, and to the age of the firſt emiſſaries of the religion, and to deduce it by an unbroken continuation, from that end of the train to the preſent.

The remaining letters of the apoſtles (and what more original than *their* letters can we have) though written without the remoteſt deſign of tranſmitting the hiſtory of Chriſt, or Chriſtianity, to future ages, or even of making it known to their contemporaries, incidentally diſcloſe to us the following circumſtances: "Chriſt's deſcent and family, his innocence, the meekneſs and gentleneſs of his character (a recognition which goes to the whole goſpel hiſtory) his exalted nature, his circumciſion, tranſfiguration, his life of oppoſition and ſuffering, his patience and reſignation, the appointment of the euchariſt and the manner of

a Michaelis has computed, and, as it ſhould ſeem fairly enough, that probably not more than twenty children periſhed by this cruel precaution. Michael. Introd. to the N. Teſt. tranſlated by Marſh. Vol. I. c. ii. ſect. 11.

b There is no notice taken of Chriſtianity in the Miſhna, a collection of Jewiſh traditions compiled about the year 180, although it contains a Tract, "Decultu Peregrino," of ſtrange or idolatrous worſhip; yet it cannot be diſputed but that Chriſtianity was perfectly well known in the world at this time. There is extremely little notice of the ſubject in the Jeruſalem Talmud, compiled about the year 300, and not much more in the Babyloniſh Talmud, of the year 500, although both theſe works are of a religious nature, and although, when the firſt was compiled, Chriſtianity was upon the point of becoming the religion of the ſtate, and, when the letter was publiſhed, had been ſo for 200 years.

it, his agony, his confeſſion before Pontius Pilate, his ſtripes, crucifixion, burial, reſurrection, his appearance after it, firſt to Peter, then to the reſt of the apoſtles, his aſcenſion into heaven, and his deſignation to be a future judge of mankind: the ſtated reſidence of the apoſtles at Jeruſalem, the working of miracles by the firſt preachers of the goſpel, who were alſo the hearers of Chriſt:[a] the ſucceſsful propagation of the religion, the perſecution of its followers, the miraculous converſion of Paul, miracles wrought by himſelf, and alleged in his controverſies with his adverſaries, and in letters to the perſons amongſt whom they were wrought; finally, *that miracles were the ſigns of an apoſtle.*"[b]

In an epiſtle bearing the name of Barnabas the companion of Paul, probably genuine, certainly belonging to that age, we have the ſufferings of Chriſt, his choice of apoſtles and their number, his paſſion, the ſcarlet robe, the vinegar and gall, the mocking and piercing, the caſting lots for his coat,[c] his reſurrection on the eighth (i. e. the firſt day of the week[d]) and the commemorative diſtinction of that day, his manifeſtation after his reſurrection, and laſtly, his aſcenſion. We have alſo his miracles, generally but poſitively referred to in the following words: "finally teaching the people of Iſrael, and *doing many wonders and ſigns among them*, he preached to them, and ſhowed the exceeding great love which he bare towards them."[e]

In an epiſtle of Clement, a hearer of St. Paul, although written for a purpoſe remotely connected with the Chriſtian hiſtory, we have the reſurrection of Chriſt, and the ſubſequent miſſion of the apoſtles, recorded in theſe ſatisfactory terms: "The

[a] Heb. ii. 3. "How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us *by them that heard him*, God alſo bearing them witneſs, both *with ſigns and wonders*, and with *divers miracles*, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt." I allege this epiſtle without heſitation, for whatever doubts may have been raiſed about its author, there can be none concerning the age in which it was written. No epiſtle in the collection carries about it more indubitable marks of antiquity than this does. It ſpeaks, for inſtance, throughout, of the temple as then ſtanding, and of the worſhip of the temple as then ſubſiſting. Heb. viii. 4. "For if he were on earth, he ſhould not be a prieſt, ſeeing there *are* prieſts that offer according to the law." Again, Heb. xiii. 10. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which *ſerve* the tabernacle."

[b] 2 Cor. xii. 12. "Truly, *the ſigns of an apoſtle* were wrought among you in all patience, in ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds."

[c] Ep. Bar. c. vii. [d] Ibid. c. vi. [e] Ep. Bar. c. v.

apoſtles have preached to us from our Lord Jeſus Chriſt from God—For having received their command, and being *thoroughly aſſured by the reſurrection of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, they went abroad, publiſhing that the kingdom of God was at hand." [a] We find noticed alſo, the humility, yet the power of Chriſt, [b] his deſcent from Abraham, his crucifixion. We have Peter and Paul repreſented as faithful and righteous pillars of the church, the numerous ſufferings of Peter, the bonds, ſtripes and ſtoning of Paul, and more particularly, his extenſive and unwearied travels.

In an epiſtle of Polycarp, a diſciple of St. John, though only a brief hortatory letter, we have the humility, patience, ſufferings, reſurrection, and aſcenſion of Chriſt, together with the apoſtolic character of St. Paul diſtinctly recognized. [c] Of this ſame father we are alſo aſſured by Irenæus, that he (Irenæus) had heard him relate, "what he had received from eye-witneſſes concerning the Lord, both *concerning his miracles* and his doctrine." [d]

In the remaining works of Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, larger than thoſe of Polycarp (yet, like thoſe of Polycarp, treating of ſubjects in no wiſe leading to any recital of the Chriſtian hiſtory) the occaſional alluſions are proportionably more copious. The deſcent of Chriſt from David, his mother Mary, his miraculous conception, the ſtar at his birth, his baptiſm by John, the reaſon aſſigned for it, his appeal to the prophets, the ointment poured on his head, his ſufferings under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch, his reſurrection, the Lord's day called and kept in commemoration of it, and the euchariſt, in both its parts, are unequivocally referred to. Upon the reſurrection this writer is even circumſtantial. He mentions the apoſtles, eating and drinking with Chriſt after he was riſen, their feeling and their handling him; from which laſt circumſtance Ignatius raiſes this juſt reflection—"They believed, being convinced both by his fleſh and ſpirit; for this cauſe they deſpiſed death, and were found to be above it." [e]

Quadratus, of the ſame age with Ignatius, has left us the following noble teſtimony:—"The works of our Saviour were always conſpicuous, for they were real: both they that were.

[a] Ep. Clem. Rom. c. xlii. [b] Ib. c. xvi.
[c] Pol. Ep. ad Phil. c. v. viii. ii. iii. [d] Ir. ad Flor. ap. Euſ. l. v. c. 20.
[e] Ad. Smyr. c. iii.

healed, and they that were raiſed from the dead: who were ſeen not only when they were healed or raiſed, but for a long time afterwards. Not only whilſt he dwelled on this earth, but alſo after his departure, and for a good while after it, inſomuch that ſome of them have reached to our times."[a]

Juſtin Martyr came little more than thirty years after Quadratus. From Juſtin's works, which are ſtill extant, might be collected a tolerably complete account of Chriſt's life, in all points agreeing with that which is delivered in our ſcriptures; taken indeed, in a great meaſure, from thoſe ſcriptures, but ſtill proving that this account, and no other, was the account known and extant in that age. The miracles in particular, which form the part of Chriſt's hiſtory moſt material to be traced, ſtand fully and diſtinctly recognized in the following paſſage:—"He healed thoſe who had been blind, and deaf, and lame, from their birth, cauſing, by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to ſee; and by raiſing the dead, and making them to live, he induced, by his works, the men of that age to know him."[b]

It is unneceſſary to carry theſe citations lower, becauſe the hiſtory, after this time, occurs in ancient Chriſtian writings as familiarly as it is wont to do in modern ſermons; occurs always the ſame in ſubſtance, and always that which our evangeliſts repreſent.

This is not only true of thoſe writings of Chriſtians which are genuine, and of acknowledged authority, but it is, in a great meaſure, true of all their ancient writings which remain; although ſome of theſe may have been erroneouſly aſcribed to authors to whom they did not belong, or may contain falſe accounts, or may appear to be undeſerving of credit, or never indeed to have obtained any. Whatever fables they have mixed with the narrative, they preſerve the material parts, the leading facts, as we have them; and, ſo far as they do this, although they be evidences of nothing elſe, they are evidence that theſe points were *fixed*, were received and acknowledged by all Chriſtians in the ages in which the books were written. At leaſt it may be aſſerted, that, in the places where we were moſt likely to meet with ſuch things, if ſuch things had exiſted, no relics

[a] Ap. Euſ. H. E. l. iv. c. 3.

[b] Juſt. dial. cum Tryph. p. 288, ed. Thirl.

appear of any ſtory ſubſtantially different from the preſent, as the cauſe, or as the pretence of the inſtitution.

Now that the original ſtory, the ſtory delivered by the firſt preachers of the inſtitution, ſhould have died away ſo entirely as to have left no record or memorial of its exiſtence, although ſo many records and memorials of the time and tranſaction remain; and that another ſtory ſhould have ſtepped into its place, and gained excluſive poſſeſſion of the belief of all who profeſſed themſelves diſciples of the inſtitution, is beyond any example of the corruption of even oral tradition, and ſtill leſs conſiſtent with the experience of written hiſtory: and this improbability, which is very great, is rendered ſtill greater by the reflection, that no ſuch *change*, as the oblivion of one ſtory and the ſubſtitution of another, took place in any future period of the Chriſtian era. Chriſtianity has travelled through dark and turbulent ages; nevertheleſs it came out of the cloud and the ſtorm ſuch, in ſubſtance, as it entered in. Many additions were made to the primitive hiſtory, and theſe entitled to different degrees of credit; many doctrinal errors alſo were from time to time grafted into the public creed, but ſtill the original ſtory remained, and remained the ſame. In all its principal parts it has been fixed from the beginning.

Thirdly, the religious rites and uſages that prevailed amongſt the early diſciples of Chriſtianity were ſuch as belonged to, and ſprung out of, the narrative now in our hands; which accordancy ſhows, that it was the narrative upon which theſe perſons acted, and which they had received from their teachers. Our account makes the founder of the religion direct that his diſciples ſhould be baptized: We know that the firſt Chriſtians were baptized. Our account makes him direct that they ſhould hold religious aſſemblies: We find that they did hold religious aſſemblies. Our account makes the apoſtles aſſemble upon a ſtated day in the week: We find, and that from information perfectly independent of our accounts, that the Chriſtians of the firſt century did obſerve ſtated days of aſſembling. Our hiſtories record the inſtitution of the rite which we call the Lord's ſupper, and a command to repeat it in perpetual ſucceſſion: We find, amongſt the early Chriſtians, the celebration of this rite univerſal. And indeed we find concurring in all the above-mentioned obſervances, Chriſtian ſocieties of many different nations and languages, removed from one another by great diſtance of place and diſſimilitude of ſituation. It is alſo

extremely material to remark, that there is no room for inſinuating that our books were fabricated with a ſtudious accommodation to the uſages which obtained at the time they were written; that the authors of the books found the uſages eſtabliſhed, and framed the ſtory to account for their original. The ſcripture accounts, eſpecially of the Lord's ſupper, are too ſhort and curſory, not to ſay too obſcure, and, in this view, deficient, to allow a place for any ſuſpicion.[a]

Amongſt the proofs of the truth of our profeſſion, viz. that the ſtory, which we have *now*, is, in ſubſtance, the ſtory which the Chriſtians had *then*, or, in other words, that the accounts in our goſpels are, as to their principal parts at leaſt, the accounts which the apoſtles and original teachers of the religion delivered, one ariſes from obſerving, that it appears by the goſpels themſelves, that the ſtory was public at the time; that the Chriſtian community was already in poſſeſſion of the ſubſtance and principal parts of the narrative. The goſpels were not the original cauſe of the Chriſtian hiſtory being believed, but were themſelves among the conſequences of that belief. This is expreſsly affirmed by St. Luke in his brief, but, as I think, very important and inſtructive preface. "Foraſmuch (ſays the evangeliſt) as many have taken in hand to ſet forth in order a declaration of thoſe things *which are moſt ſurely believed amongſt us, even as they delivered them unto us, which, from the beginning, were eye-witneſſes and miniſters of the word;* it ſeemed good to me alſo, having had perfect underſtanding of all things from the very firſt, to write unto thee in order, moſt excellent Theophilus, that thou mighteſt know the certainty of thoſe things *wherein thou haſt been inſtructed*" This ſhort introduction teſtifies, that the ſubſtance of the hiſtory, which the evangeliſt was about to write, was already believed by Chriſtians; that it was believed upon the declarations of eye-witneſſes and miniſters of the word; that it formed the account of their religion, in which Chriſtians were inſtructed; that the office which the hiſtorian propoſed to himſelf, was to trace each particular to its origin, and to fix the certainty of many things which the reader had before heard of. In St. John's goſpel, the ſame point appears

[a] The reader who is converſant in theſe reſearches, by comparing the ſhort ſcripture accounts of the Chriſtian rites above-mentioned with the minute and circumſtantial directions contained in the pretended apoſtolical conſtitutions, will ſee the force of this obſervation; the difference between truth and forgery.

from hence, that there are ſome principal facts, to which the hiſtorian refers, but which he does not relate. A remarkable inſtance of this kind is the *aſcenſion*, which is not mentioned by St. John in its place, at the concluſion of his hiſtory, but which is plainly referred to in the following words of the ſixth chapter:[a] "What and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of man aſcend up where he was before." And ſtill more poſitively in the words which Chriſt, according to our evangeliſt, ſpoke to Mary after his reſurrection, "Touch me not, for I am not yet aſcended to my Father; but go unto my brethren, and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God."[b] This can only be accounted for by the ſuppoſition, that St. John wrote under a ſenſe of the notoriety of Chriſt's aſcenſion, amongſt thoſe by whom his book was likely to be read. The ſame account muſt alſo be given of St. Matthew's omiſſion of the ſame important fact. The thing was very well known, and it did not occur to the hiſtorian, that it was neceſſary to add any particulars concerning it. It agrees alſo with this ſolution, and with no other, that neither Matthew nor John diſpoſe of the perſon of our Lord in any manner whatever. Other intimations in St. John's goſpel of the then general notoriety of the ſtory, are the following: His manner of introducing his narrative, (ch. i. v. 15.) "John bare witneſs of him, and cried, ſaying," evidently preſuppoſes that his readers knew who John was. His rapid parenthetical reference to John's impriſonment, "for John was not yet caſt into priſon,"[c] could only come from a writer whoſe mind was in the habit of conſidering John's impriſonment as perfectly notorious. The deſcription of Andrew by the addition "Simon Peter's brother,"[d] takes it for granted that Simon Peter was well known: his name had not been mentioned before. The evangeliſt's noticing[e] the prevailing miſconſtruction of a diſcourſe, which Chriſt held with the beloved diſciple, proves that the characters and the diſcourſe were already public. And the obſervation which theſe inſtances afford, is of equal validity for the purpoſe of the preſent argument, whoever was the author of the hiſtories.

Theſe four circumſtances—firſt, the recognition of the account in its principal parts by a ſeries of ſucceeding writers; ſecondly, the total abſence of any account of the origin of the religion ſubſtantially different from ours; thirdly, the early and

[a] Alſo John iii. 13. and xvi. 28. [b] John xx. 17.
[c] John iii. 24. [d] John i. 40. [e] John xxi. 24.

extenſive prevalence of rites and inſtitutions, which reſult from our account; fourthly, our account bearing in its conſtruction proof that it is an account of facts, which were known and believed at the time; are ſufficient, I conceive, to ſupport an aſſurance, that the ſtory, which we have now, is, in general, the ſtory which Chriſtians had at the beginning. I ſay *in general;* by which term I mean, that it is the ſame in its texture, and in its principal facts. For inſtance, I make no doubt, for the reaſons above ſtated, but that the reſurrection of the founder of the religion was always a part of the Chriſtian ſtory. Nor can a doubt of this remain upon the mind of any one, who reflects that the reſurrection is, in ſome form or other, aſſerted, referred to, or aſſumed, in every Chriſtian writing, of every deſcription, which hath come down to us.

And if our evidence ſtopped here, we ſhould have a ſtrong caſe to offer: For we ſhould have to allege, that in the reign of Tiberius Cæſar, a certain number of perſons ſet about an attempt of eſtabliſhing a new religion in the world; in the proſecution of which purpoſe, they voluntarily encountered great dangers, undertook great labours, ſuſtained great ſufferings, all *for* a miraculous ſtory which they publiſhed wherever they came; and that the reſurrection of a dead man, whom, during his life, they had followed and accompanied, was a conſtant part of this ſtory. I know nothing in the above ſtatement which can, with any appearance of reaſon, be diſputed; and I know nothing in the hiſtory of the human ſpecies ſimilar to it.

CHAP. VIII.

There is ſatisfactory evidence that many perſons, profeſſing to have been original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.

THAT the ſtory, which we have now, is, in the main, the ſtory which the apoſtles publiſhed, is, I think, nearly certain from the conſiderations which have been propoſed. But whether, when we come to the particulars and the detail of the narrative, the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament be

deſerving of credit as hiſtories, ſo that a fact ought to be accounted true becauſe it is found in them; or whether they are entitled to be conſidered as repreſenting the accounts, which, true or falſe, the apoſtles publiſhed; whether their authority, in either of theſe views, can be truſted to, is a point which neceſſarily depends upon what we know of the books, and of their authors.

Now, in treating of this part of our argument, the firſt, and a moſt material obſervation upon the ſubject is, that, ſuch was the ſituation of the authors to whom the four goſpels are aſcribed, that, if any one of the four be genuine, it is ſufficient for our purpoſe. The received author of the firſt was an original apoſtle and emiſſary of the religion. The received author of the ſecond was an inhabitant of Jeruſalem at the time, to whoſe houſe the apoſtles were wont to reſort, and himſelf an attendant upon one of the moſt eminent of that number. The received author of the third was a ſtated companion and fellow-traveller of the moſt active of all the teachers of the religion, and in the courſe of his travels frequently in the ſociety of the original apoſtles. The received author of the fourth, as well as of the firſt, was one of theſe apoſtles. No ſtronger evidence of the truth of a hiſtory can ariſe from the ſituation of the hiſtorian than what is here offered. The authors of all the hiſtories lived at the time and upon the ſpot. The authors of two of the hiſtories were preſent at many of the ſcenes which they deſcribe; eye-witneſſes of the facts, ear-witneſſes of the diſcourſes; writing from perſonal knowledge and recollection, and what ſtrengthens their teſtimony, writing upon a ſubject in which their minds were deeply engaged, and in which, as they muſt have been very frequently repeating the accounts to others, the paſſages of the hiſtory would be kept continually alive in their memory. Whoever reads the goſpels (and they ought to be read for this particular purpoſe) will find in them not merely a general affirmation of miraculous powers, but detailed circumſtantial accounts of miracles, with ſpecifications of time, place and perſons; and theſe accounts many and various. In the goſpels, therefore, which bear the names of Matthew and John, theſe narratives, if they really proceeded from theſe men, muſt either be true, as far as the fidelity of human recollection is uſually to be depended upon, that is, muſt be true in ſubſtance, and in their principal parts (which is ſufficient for the purpoſe of proving a ſupernatural agency) or they muſt be wil-

ful and meditated falſehoods. Yet the writers who fabricated and uttered theſe falſehoods, if they be ſuch, are of the number of thoſe who, unleſs the whole contexture of the Chriſtian ſtory be a dream, ſacrificed their eaſe and ſafety in the cauſe, and for a purpoſe the moſt inconſiſtent that is poſſible with diſhoneſt intentions. They were villains for no end but to teach honeſty, and martyrs without the leaſt proſpect of honour or advantage.

The goſpels which bear the name of Mark and Luke, although not the narratives of eye-witneſſes, are, if genuine, removed from that only one degree. They are the narratives of contemporary writers, of writers themſelves mixing with the buſineſs, one of the two probably living in the place which was the principal ſcene of action, both living in habits of ſociety and correſpondence with thoſe who had been preſent at the tranſactions which they relate. The latter of them accordingly tells us (and with apparent ſincerity, becauſe he tells it without pretending to perſonal knowledge, and without claiming for his work greater authority than belonged to it) that the things, which were believed amongſt Chriſtians came from thoſe who from the beginning were eye-witneſſes and miniſters of the word; that he had traced up accounts to their ſource; and that he was prepared to inſtruct his reader in the certainty of the things which he related.[a] Very few hiſtories lie ſo cloſe to their facts; very few hiſtorians are ſo nearly connected with the ſubject of their narrative, or poſſeſs ſuch means of authentic information as theſe.

The ſituation of the writers applies to the truth of the facts which they record. But at preſent we uſe their teſtimony to a point ſomewhat ſhort of this, namely, that the facts recorded in the goſpels, whether true or falſe, are the facts and the ſort of facts, which the original preachers of the religion alleged. Strictly ſpeaking, I am concerned only to ſhow, that what the goſpels contain is the ſame as what the apoſtles preached. Now how ſtands the proof of this point? A ſet of men went about the world publiſhing a ſtory compoſed of miraculous accounts (for miraculous from the very nature and exigency of the caſe

[a] Why ſhould not the candid and modeſt preface of this hiſtorian be believed, as well as that which Dion Caſſius prefixes to his life of Commodus. "Theſe things and the following I write not from the report of others, but from my own knowledge and obſervation." I ſee no reaſon to doubt but that both paſſages deſcribe truly enough the ſituation of the authors.

they muſt have been) and, upon the ſtrength of theſe accounts, called upon mankind to quit the religions in which they had been educated, and to take up, from thenceforth, a new ſyſtem of opinions, and new rules of action. What is more, in atteſtation of theſe accounts, that is, in ſupport of an inſtitution of which theſe accounts were the foundation, the ſame men voluntarily expoſed themſelves to haraſſing and perpetual labours, dangers, and ſufferings. We want to know what theſe accounts were. We have the particulars, i. e. many particulars, from two of their number. We have them from an attendant of one of the number, and who there is reaſon to believe was an inhabitant of Jeruſalem at the time. We have them from a fourth writer, who accompanied the moſt laborious miſſionary of the inſtitution in his travels; who, in the courſe of theſe travels, was frequently brought into the ſociety of the reſt; and who, let it be obſerved, begins his narrative by telling us, that he is about to relate the things which had been delivered by thoſe who were miniſters of the word, and eye-witneſſes of the fact. I do not know what information can be more ſatisfactory than this. We may, perhaps, perceive the force and value of it more ſenſibly, if we reflect how requiring we ſhould have been if we had wanted it. Suppoſing it to be ſufficiently proved, that the religion, now profeſſed amongſt us, owed its original to the preaching and miniſtry of a number of men, who, about eighteen centuries ago, ſet forth in the world a new ſyſtem of religious opinions, founded upon certain extraordinary things which they related of a wonderful perſon who had appeared in Judea; ſuppoſe it to be alſo ſufficiently proved, that, in the courſe and proſecution of their miniſtry, theſe men had ſubjected themſelves to extreme hardſhips, fatigue, and peril; but ſuppoſe the accounts which they publiſhed had not been committed to writing till ſome ages after their times, or at leaſt that no hiſtories, but what had been compoſed ſome ages afterwards, had reached our hands; we ſhould have ſaid, and with reaſon, that we were willing to believe theſe men under the circumſtances in which they delivered their teſtimony, but that we did not, at this day, know with ſufficient evidence what their teſtimony was. Had we received the particulars of it from any of thoſe who lived and converſed with them, from any of their hearers, or even from any of their contemporaries, we ſhould have had ſomething to rely upon. Now, if our books be genuine, we have all theſe. We have the very ſpecies of in-

formation which, as it appears to me, our imagination would have carved out for us, if it had been wanting.

But I have said, that, if any one of the four gospels be genuine, we have not only direct historical testimony to the point we contend for, but testimony which, so far as the point is concerned, cannot reasonably be rejected. If the first gospel was really written by Matthew, we have the narrative of one of the number from which to judge what were the miracles, and the kind of miracles which the apostles attributed to Jesus. Although, for argument's sake, and only for argument's sake, we should allow that this gospel had been erroneously ascribed to Matthew, yet if the gospel of St. John be genuine, the observation holds with no less strength. Again, although the gospels both of Matthew and John could be supposed to be spurious, yet if the gospel of St. Luke was truly the composition of that person, or of any person, be his name what it might, who was actually in the situation in which the author of that gospel professes himself to have been; or if the gospel which bears the name of Mark really proceeded from him; we still, even upon the lowest supposition, possess the accounts of one writer at least, who was not only contemporary with the apostles, but associated with them in their ministry; which authority seems sufficient, when the question is simply what it was which these apostles advanced.

I think it material to have this well noticed. The New Testament contains a great number of distinct writings, the genuineness of any one of which is almost sufficient to prove the truth of the religion: it contains, however, four distinct histories, the genuineness of any one of which is perfectly sufficient. If, therefore, we must be considered as encountering the risk of error in assigning the authors of our books, we are entitled to the advantage of so many separate probabilities. And although it should appear that some of the evangelists had seen and used each other's works, this discovery, whilst it subtracts indeed from their characters as testimonies strictly independent, diminishes, I conceive, little, either their separate authority, by which I mean the authority of any one that is genuine, or their mutual confirmation. For let the most disadvantageous supposition possible be made concerning them; let it be allowed, what I should have no great difficulty in admitting, that Mark compiled his history almost entirely from those of Matthew and Luke; and let it also, for a moment, be supposed that these histories were not, in fact, written by Matthew and Luke; yet if it be true that

Mark, a contemporary of the apoſtles, living in habits of ſociety with the apoſtles, a fellow-traveller and fellow-labourer with ſome of them; if, I ſay, it be true that this perſon made the compilation, it follows, that the writings from which he made it exiſted in the times of the apoſtles, and not only ſo, but that they were then in ſuch eſteem and credit that a companion of the apoſtles formed a hiſtory out of them. Let the goſpel of Mark be called an epitome of that of Matthew; if a perſon in the ſituation in which Mark is deſcribed to have been, actually made the epitome, it affords the ſtrongeſt poſſible atteſtation to the character of the original. Again, paralleliſms in ſentences, in words, and in the order of words, have been traced out between the goſpel of Matthew and that of Luke; which concurrence cannot eaſily be explained otherwiſe than ſuppoſing, either that Luke had conſulted Matthew's hiſtory, or, what appears to me in no wiſe incredible, that minutes of ſome of Chriſt's diſcourſes, as well as brief memoirs of ſome paſſages of his life, had been committed to writing at the time, and that ſuch written accounts had by both authors been occaſionally admitted into their hiſtories. Either ſuppoſition is perfectly conſiſtent with the acknowledged formation of St. Luke's narrative, who profeſſes not to write as an eye-witneſs, but to have inveſtigated the original of every account which he delivers; in other words, to have collected them from ſuch documents and teſtimonies as he, who had the beſt opportunities of making inquiries, judged to be authentic. Therefore, allowing that this writer alſo, in ſome inſtances, borrowed from the goſpel which we call Matthew's, and once more allowing, for the ſake of ſtating the argument, that that goſpel was not the production of the author to whom we aſcribe it, yet ſtill we have, in St. Luke's goſpel, a hiſtory given by a writer immediately connected with the tranſaction, with the witneſſes of it, with the perſons engaged in it, and compoſed from materials which that perſon, thus ſituated, deemed to be ſafe ſources of intelligence: in other words, whatever ſuppoſition be made concerning any or all the other goſpels, if St. Luke's goſpel be genuine, we have in it a credible evidence of the point which we maintain. The goſpel according to St. John appears to be and is on all hands allowed to be an independent teſtimony, ſtrictly and properly ſo called. Notwithſtanding, therefore, any connexion, or ſuppoſed connexion, between ſome of the goſpels, I again repeat, what I before ſaid, that, if any one of the four be

genuine, we have in that one, ſtrong reaſon from the character and ſituation of the writer to believe, that we poſſeſs the accounts which the original emiſſaries of the religion delivered.

II. In treating of the written evidences of Chriſtianity, next to their ſeparate, we are to conſider their aggregate authority. Now there is in the evangelic hiſtory a cumulation of teſtimony which belongs hardly to any other, but which our habitual mode of reading the ſcriptures ſometimes cauſes us to overlook. When a paſſage, in any wiſe relating to the hiſtory of Chriſt, is read to us out of the epiſtle of Clemens Romanus, the epiſtles of Ignatius, of Polycarp, or from any other writing of that age, we are immediately ſenſible of the confirmation which it affords to the ſcripture account. Here is a new witneſs. Now if we had been accuſtomed to read the goſpel of Matthew alone, and had known that of Luke only as the generality of Chriſtians know the writings of the apoſtolical fathers, that is, had known that ſuch a writing was extant and acknowledged; when we came, for the firſt time, to look into what it contained, and found many of the facts which Matthew recorded, recorded alſo there, many other facts of a ſimilar nature added, and throughout the whole work the ſame general ſeries of tranſactions ſtated, and the ſame general character of the perſon who was the ſubject of the hiſtory preſerved, I apprehend that we ſhould feel our minds ſtrongly impreſſed by this diſcovery of freſh evidence. We ſhould feel a renewal of the ſame ſentiment in firſt reading the goſpel of St. John. That of St. Mark perhaps would ſtrike us as an abridgment of the hiſtory with which we are already acquainted; but we ſhould naturally reflect, that, if that hiſtory was abridged by ſuch a perſon as Mark, or by any perſon of ſo early an age, it afforded one of the higheſt poſſible atteſtations of the value of the work. This ſucceſſive diſcloſure of proof would leave us aſſured, that there muſt have been at leaſt ſome reality in a ſtory which, not one, but many, had taken in hand to commit to writing. The very exiſtence of four ſeparate hiſtories would ſatisfy us that the ſubject had a foundation; and when, amidſt the variety which the different information of the different writers had ſupplied to their accounts, or which their different choice and judgment in ſelecting their materials had produced, we obſerved many facts to ſtand the ſame in all; of theſe facts, at leaſt, we ſhould conclude, that they were fixed in their credit and publicity. If, after this, we ſhould come to the knowledge of a diſtinct hiſto-

ry, and that alſo of the ſame age with the reſt, taking up the ſubject where the others had left it, and carrying on a narrative of the effects produced in the world by the extraordinary cauſes of which we had already been informed, and which effects ſubſiſt at this day, we ſhould think the reality of the original ſtory in no little degree eſtabliſhed by this ſupplement. If ſubſequent inquiries ſhould bring to our knowledge, one after another, letters written by ſome of the principal agents in the buſineſs, upon the buſineſs, and during the time of their activity and concern in it, aſſuming all along and recognizing the original ſtory, agitating the queſtions that aroſe out of it, preſſing the obligations which reſulted from it, giving advice and directions to thoſe who acted upon it, I conceive that we ſhould find, in every one of theſe, a ſtill further ſupport to the concluſion we had formed. At preſent the weight of this ſucceſſive confirmation is, in a great meaſure unperceived by us. The evidence does not appear to us what it is; for, being from our infancy accuſtomed to regard the New Teſtament as one book, we ſee in it only one teſtimony. The whole occurs to us as a ſingle evidence; and its different parts, not as diſtinct atteſtations, but as different portions only of the ſame. Yet in this conception of the ſubject we are certainly miſtaken; for the very diſcrepancies amongſt the ſeveral documents which form our volume prove, if all other proof was wanting, that in their original compoſition they were ſeparate, and moſt of them independent productions.

If we diſpoſe of our ideas in a different order, the matter ſtands thus:—Whilſt the tranſaction was recent, and the original witneſſes were at hand to relate it; and whilſt the apoſtles were buſied in preaching and travelling, in collecting diſciples, in forming and regulating ſocieties of converts, in ſupporting themſelves againſt oppoſition; whilſt they exerciſed their miniſtry under the haraſſings of frequent perſecution, and in a ſtate of almoſt continual alarm, it is not probable that, in this engaged, anxious, and unſettled condition of life, they would think immediately of writing hiſtories for the information of the public or of poſterity.[a] But it is very probable that emergencies

[a] This thought occurred to Euſebius—"Nor were the apoſtles of Chriſt greatly concerned about the writing of books, being engaged in a more excellent miniſtry, which is above all human power." Ecc. Hiſt. l. iii. c. 24. The ſame conſideration accounts alſo for the paucity of Chriſtian writings in the firſt century of its era.

might draw, from some of them, occasional letters upon the subject of their mission to converts, or to societies of converts, with which they were connected; or that they might address written discourses and exhortations to the disciples of the institution at large, which would be received and read with a respect proportioned to the character of the writer. Accounts in the mean time would get abroad of the extraordinary things that had been passing, written with different degrees of information and correctness. The extension of the Christian society, which could no longer be instructed by a personal intercourse with the apostles, and the possible circulation of imperfect or erroneous narratives, would soon teach some amongst them the expediency of sending forth authentic memoirs of the life and doctrine of their Master. When accounts appeared, authorised by the name, credit, and situation of the writers, recommended or recognized by the apostles and first preachers of the religion, or found to coincide with what the apostles and first preachers of the religion had taught, other accounts would fall into disuse and neglect; whilst these, maintaining their reputation (as, if genuine and well founded, they would do) under the test of time, inquiry and contradiction, might be expected to make their way into the hands of Christians of all countries of the world. This seems the natural progress of the business; and with this the records in our possession, and the evidence concerning them, correspond. We have remaining, in the first place, many letters of the kind above described, which have been preserved with a care and fidelity answering to the respect with which we may suppose that such letters would be received. But as these letters were not written to prove the truth of the Christian religion, in the sense in which we regard that question, nor to convey information of facts, of which those to whom the letters written had been previously informed; we are not to look in them for any thing more than incidental allusions to the Christian history. We are able, however, to gather from these documents various particular attestations which have been already enumerated; and this is a species of written evidence, as far as it goes, in the highest degree satisfactory, and in point of time perhaps the first. But for our more circumstantial information we have, in the next place, five direct *histories*, bearing the names of persons acquainted, by their situation, with the truth of what they relate, and three of them purporting, in the very body of the narrative, to be written by such persons: of

which books we know that ſome were in the hands of thoſe who were contemporaries of the apoſtles, and that, in the age immediately poſterior to that, they were in the hands, we may ſay, of every one, and received by Chriſtians with ſo much reſpect and deference, as to be conſtantly quoted and referred to by them without any doubt of the truth of their accounts. They were treated as ſuch hiſtories, proceeding from ſuch authorities, might expect to be treated. In the preface to one of our hiſtories we have intimations left us of the exiſtence of ſome ancient accounts which are now loſt. There is nothing in this circumſtance that can ſurpriſe us. It was to be expected from the magnitude and novelty of the occaſion that ſuch accounts would *ſwarm*. When better accounts came forth, theſe died away. Our preſent hiſtories ſuperſeded others. They ſoon acquired a character and eſtabliſhed a reputation which does not appear to have belonged to any other: that, at leaſt, can be proved concerning them, which cannot be proved concerning any other.

But to return to the point which led to theſe reflections. By conſidering our records in either of the two views in which we have repreſented them, we ſhall perceive that we poſſeſs a *collection of proofs*, and not a naked or ſolitary teſtimony; and that the written evidence is of ſuch a kind, and comes to us in ſuch a ſtate, as the natural order and progreſs of things, in the infancy of the inſtitution, might be expected to produce.

Thirdly. The genuineneſs of the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament is undoubtedly a point of importance, becauſe the ſtrength of their evidence is augmented by our knowledge of the ſituation of their authors, their relation to the ſubject, and the part which they ſuſtained in the tranſaction; and the teſtimonies which we are able to produce compoſe a firm ground of perſuaſion that the goſpels were written by the perſons whoſe names they bear. Nevertheleſs I muſt be allowed to ſtate, that, to the argument which I am endeavouring to maintain, this point is not eſſential; I mean, ſo eſſential as that the fate of the argument depends upon it. The queſtion before us is, whether the goſpel exhibit the ſtory which the apoſtles and firſt emiſſaries of the religion publiſhed; and *for* which they acted and ſuffered in the manner, in which, for ſome miraculous ſtory or other, they did act and ſuffer. Now let us ſuppoſe that we poſſeſſed no other information concerning theſe books than that they were written by early diſciples of Chriſtianity; that

they were known and read during the time, or near the time, of the original apoſtles of the religion ; that by Chriſtians whom the apoſtles inſtructed, by ſocieties of Chriſtians which the apoſtles founded, theſe books were *received* (by which term "received," I mean that they were believed to contain authentic accounts of the tranſaction upon which the religion reſted, and accounts which were accordingly uſed, repeated, and relied upon) this reception would be a valid proof that theſe books, whoever were the authors of them, muſt have accorded with what the apoſtles taught. A reception by the firſt race of Chriſtians, is evidence that they agreed with what the firſt teachers of the religion delivered. In particular, if they had not agreed with what the apoſtles themſelves preached, how could they have gained credit in churches and ſocieties which the apoſtles eſtabliſhed ?

Now the fact of their early exiſtence, and not only of their exiſtence but their reputation, is made out by ſome ancient teſtimonies which do not happen to ſpecify the names of the writers : add to which, what hath been already hinted, that two out of the four goſpels contain averments in the body of the hiſtory, which, though they do not diſcloſe the names, fix the time and ſituation of the authors, viz. that one was written by an eye-witneſs of the ſufferings of Chriſt, the other by a contemporary of the apoſtles. In the goſpel of St. John (xix. 35) after deſcribing the crucifixion, with the particular circumſtance of piercing Chriſt's ſide with a ſpear, the hiſtorian adds, as from himſelf, "and he that ſaw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he ſaith true, that ye might believe." Again (xxi. 24) after relating a converſation which paſſed between Peter and the diſciple, as it is there expreſſed, whom Jeſus loved, it is added, "this is the diſciple which teſtifieth of theſe things and wrote theſe things." This teſtimony, let it be remarked, is not the leſs worthy of regard, becauſe it is in one view imperfect. The name is not mentioned, which, if a fraudulent purpoſe had been intended, would have been done. The third of our preſent goſpels purports to have been written by the perſon who wrote the Acts of the Apoſtles ; in which latter hiſtory, or rather latter part of the ſame hiſtory, the author, by uſing in various places the firſt perſon plural, declares himſelf to have been a contemporary of all, and a companion of one of the original preachers of the religion.

CHAP. IX.

There is satisfactory evidence that many persons, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

"Of the authenticity of the scriptures."

NOT forgetting, therefore, what credit is due to the evangelic history, supposing even any one of the four gospels to be genuine; what credit is due to the gospels, even supposing nothing to be known concerning them but that they were written by early disciples of the religion, and received with deference by early Christian churches; more especially not forgetting what credit is due to the New Testament in its capacity of *cumulative* evidence; we now proceed to state the proper and distinct proofs, which show not only the general value of these records, but their specific authority, and the high probability there is that they actually came from the persons whose names they bear.

There are, however, a few preliminary reflections, by which we may draw up with more regularity to the propositions, upon which the close and particular discussion of the subject depends. Of which nature are the following:

I. We are able to produce a great number of ancient *manuscripts*, found in many different countries, and in countries widely distant from each other, all of them anterior to the art of printing, some certainly seven or eight hundred years old, and some which have been preserved probably above a thousand years. [a] We have also many ancient *versions* of these books, and some of them into languages which are not at present, nor for many ages have been, spoken in any part of the world. The existence of these manuscripts and versions proves that the scriptures were not the production of any modern contrivance. It does away also the uncertainty which hangs over such publications as the works, real or pretended, of Ossian and Rowley, in which the editors are challenged to produce their manuscripts, and to

[a] The Alexandrian manuscript, now in the king's library, was written probably in the fourth or fifth century.

ſhow where they obtained their copies. The number of manuſcripts, far exceeding thoſe of any other book, and their wide diſperſion, affords an argument, in ſome meaſure, to the ſenſes, that the ſcriptures anciently, in like manner as at this day, were more read and ſought after than any other books, and that alſo in many different countries. The greateſt part of ſpurious Chriſtian writings are utterly loſt, the reſt preſerved by ſome ſingle manuſcript. There is weight alſo in Dr. Bentley's obſervation, that the New Teſtament has ſuffered leſs injury by the errors of tranſcribers than the works of any profane author of the ſame ſize and antiquity; that is, there never was any writing in the preſervation and purity of which the world was ſo intereſted or ſo careful.

II. An argument of great weight with thoſe who are judges of the proofs upon which it is founded, and capable, through their teſtimony, of being addreſſed to every underſtanding, is that which ariſes from the ſtyle and language of the New Teſtament. It is juſt ſuch language as might be expected from the apoſtles, from perſons of their age and in their ſituation, and from no other perſons. It is the ſtyle neither of claſſic authors, nor of the ancient Chriſtian fathers, but Greek coming from men of Hebrew origin; abounding, that is, with Hebriac and Syriac idioms, ſuch as would naturally be found in the writings of men who uſed a language ſpoken indeed where they lived, but not the common dialect of the country. This happy peculiarity is a ſtrong proof of the genuineneſs of theſe writings; for who ſhould forge them? The Chriſtian fathers were for the moſt part totally ignorant of Hebrew, and therefore were not likely to inſert Hebraiſms and Syriaſms into their writings. The few who had a knowledge of the Hebrew, as Juſtin Martyr, Origen, and Epiphanius, wrote in a language which bears no reſemblance to that of the New Teſtament. The Nazarenes, who underſtood Hebrew, uſed chiefly, perhaps almoſt entirely, the goſpel of St. Matthew, and therefore cannot be ſuſpected of forging the reſt of the ſacred writings. The argument, at any rate, proves the antiquity of theſe books; that they belonged to the age of the apoſtles; that they could be compoſed indeed in no other.[a]

[a] See this argument ſtated more at large in Michaelis's introduction (Marſh's tranſlation) vol. I. c. ii. ſec. x. from which theſe obſervations are taken.

III. Why ſhould we queſtion the genuineneſs of theſe books? Is it for that they contain accounts of ſupernatural events? I apprehend that this, at the bottom, is the real, though ſecret, cauſe of our heſitation about them; for had the writings inſcribed with the name of Matthew and John related nothing but ordinary hiſtory, there would have been no more doubt whether theſe writings were theirs, than there is concerning the acknowledged works of Joſephus or Philo; that is, there would have been no doubt at all. Now it ought to be conſidered that this reaſon, however it may apply to the credit which is given to a writer's judgment or veracity, affects the queſtion of genuineneſs very indirectly. The works of Bede exhibit many wonderful relations; but who for that reaſon doubts that they were written by Bede? The ſame of a multitude of other authors. To which may be added, that we aſk no more for our books than what we allow to other books in ſome ſort ſimilar to ours. We do not deny the genuineneſs of the Koran. We admit that the hiſtory of Appollonius Tyanæus, purporting to be written by Philoſtratus, was really written by Philoſtratus.

IV. If it had been an eaſy thing in the early times of the inſtitution to have forged Chriſtian writings, and to have obtained currency and reception to the forgeries, we ſhould have had many appearing in the name of Chriſt himſelf. No writings would have been received with ſo much avidity and reſpect as theſe; conſequently none afforded ſo great temptation to forgery. Yet have we heard but of one attempt of this ſort deſerving of the ſmalleſt notice, *that* in a piece of a very few lines, and ſo far from ſucceeding, I mean from obtaining acceptance and reputation, or an acceptance and reputation in any wiſe ſimilar to that which can be proved to have attended the books of the New Teſtament, that it is not ſo much as mentioned by any writer of the three firſt centuries. The learned reader need not be informed that I mean the epiſtle of Chriſt to Abgarus, king of Edeſſa, found at preſent in the work of Euſebius,[a] as a piece acknowledged by him, though not without conſiderable doubt whether the whole paſſage be not an interpolation, as it is moſt certain that after the publication of Euſebius's work, this epiſtle was univerſally rejected.[b]

[a] H. Eccl. l. i. c. 13.

[b] Auguſtin, A. D. 395, (de conſenſ. evang. c. 34) had *heard* that the Pagans pretended to be poſſeſſed of an epiſtle from Chriſt to Peter and

V. If the aſcription of the goſpels to their reſpective authors had been arbitrary or conjectural, they would have been aſcribed to more eminent men. This obſervation holds concerning the three firſt goſpels, the reputed authors of which were enabled, by their ſituation, to obtain true intelligence, and were likely to deliver an honeſt account of what they knew, but were perſons not diſtinguiſhed in the hiſtory by extraordinary marks of notice or commendation. Of the apoſtles, I hardly know any one of whom leſs is ſaid than of Matthew, or of whom the little that is ſaid, is leſs calculated to magnify his character. Of Mark nothing is ſaid in the goſpels; and what is ſaid of any perſon of that name in the acts, and in the epiſtles, in no part beſtows praiſe or eminence upon him. The name of Luke is mentioned only in St. Paul's epiſtles,[a] and that very tranſiently. The judgment, therefore, which aſſigned theſe writings to theſe authors proceeded, it may be preſumed, upon proper knowledge and evidence, and not upon a voluntary choice of names.

VI. Chriſtian writers and Chriſtian churches appear to have ſoon arrived at a very general agreement upon the ſubject, and that without the interpoſition of any public authority. When the diverſity of opinion which prevailed and prevails among Chriſtians in other points is conſidered, their concurrence in the canon of ſcripture is remarkable, and of great weight, eſpecially as it ſeems to have been the reſult of private and free inquiry. We have no knowledge of any interference of authority in the queſtion before the council of Laodicea in the year 363. Probably the decree of this council rather declared than regulated the public judgment, or, more properly ſpeaking, the judgment of ſome neighbouring churches, the council itſelf conſiſting of no more than thirty or forty biſhops of Lydia and

Paul, but he had never ſeen it, and appears to doubt of the exiſtence of any ſuch piece, either genuine or ſpurious. No other ancient writer mentions it. He alſo, and he alone notices, and that in order to condemn it, an epiſtle aſcribed to Chriſt by the Manichees, A. D. 270, and a ſhort hymn attributed to him by the Priſcillianiſts, A. D. 378, (cont. Fauſt. Man. lib. 28, c. 4.) The lateneſs of the writer who notices theſe things, the manner in which he notices them, and, above all, the ſilence of every preceding writer, render them unworthy of conſideration.

[a] Col. iv. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 11. Philem. 24.

the adjoining countries.[a] Nor does its authority ſeem to have extended farther; for we find numerous Chriſtian writers, after this time, diſcuſſing the queſtion, "what books were entitled to be received as ſcripture," with great freedom, upon proper grounds of evidence, and without any reference to the deciſion at Laodicea.

Theſe conſiderations are not to be neglected; but of an argument concerning the genuineneſs of ancient writings, the ſubſtance undoubtedly and ſtrength is ancient teſtimony.

This teſtimony it is neceſſary to exhibit ſomewhat in detail; for when Chriſtian advocates merely tell us, that we have the ſame reaſon for believing the goſpels to be written by the evangeliſts, whoſe names they bear, as we have for believing the Commentaries to be Cæſar's, the Æneid Virgil's, or the orations Cicero's, they content themſelves with an imperfect repreſentation. They ſtate nothing more than what is true, but they do not ſtate the truth correctly. In the number, variety, and early date of our teſtimonies, we far exceed all other ancient books. For one, which the moſt celebrated work of the moſt celebrated Greek or Roman writer can allege, we produce many. But then it is more requiſite in our books, than in theirs, to ſeparate and diſtinguiſh them from ſpurious competitors. The reſult, I am convinced, will be ſatisfactory to every fair inquirer; but this circumſtance renders an inquiry neceſſary.

In a work, however like the preſent, there is a difficulty in finding a place for evidence of this kind. To purſue the detail of proofs throughout, would be to tranſcribe a great part of Dr. Lardner's eleven octavo volumes; to leave the argument without proofs, is to leave it without effect; for the perſuaſion produced by this ſpecies of evidence, depends upon a view and induction of the particulars which compoſe it.

The method which I propoſe to myſelf is, firſt, to place before the reader, in one view, the propoſitions which comprife the ſeveral heads of our teſtimony, and afterwards, to repeat the ſame propoſitions in ſo many diſtinct ſections, with the neceſſary authorities ſubjoined to each.[b]

The following, then, are the allegations upon the ſubject, which are capable of being eſtabliſhed by proof:

[a] Lardner's Cred. vol. VIII. p. 291, et. ſeq.

[b] The reader, when he has the propoſitions before him, will obſerve that the argument, if he ſhould omit the ſections, proceeds connectedly from this point.

I. That the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, meaning thereby the four goſpels and the acts of the apoſtles, are quoted, or alluded to, by a ſeries of Chriſtian writers, beginning with thoſe who were contemporary with the apoſtles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in cloſe and regular ſucceſſion from their time to the preſent.

II. That when they are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted, or alluded to with peculiar reſpect, as books *ſui generis*, as poſſeſſing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as concluſive in all queſtions and controverſies amongſt Chriſtians.

III. That they were, in very early times, collected into a diſtinct volume.

IV. That they were diſtinguiſhed by appropriate names and titles of reſpect.

V. that they were publickly read and expounded in the religious aſſemblies of the early Chriſtians.

VI. That commentaries were written upon them, harmonies formed out of them, different copies carefully collated, and verſions of them made into different languages.

VII. That they were received by Chriſtians of different ſects, by many heretics as well as Catholics, and uſually appealed to by both ſides in the controverſies which aroſe in thoſe days.

VIII. That the four goſpels, the acts of the apoſtles, thirteen epiſtles of St. Paul, the firſt epiſtle of John, and the firſt of Peter, were received, without doubt, by thoſe who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our preſent canon.

IX. That the goſpels were attacked by the early adverſaries of Chriſtianity, as books containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

X. That formal catalogues of authentic ſcriptures were publiſhed; in all which our preſent ſacred hiſtories were included.

XI. That theſe propoſitions cannot be affirmed of any other books, claiming to be books of ſcripture; by which I mean thoſe books, which are commonly called apochryphal books of the New Teſtament.

SECT. I.

The hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, meaning thereby the four Goſpels and the Acts of the Apoſtles, are quoted or alluded to, by a ſeries of Chriſtian writers, beginning with thoſe who were contemporary with the Apoſtles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in cloſe and regular ſucceſſion from their time to the preſent.

THE medium of proof ſtated in this propoſition, is of all others, the moſt unqueſtionable the leaſt liable to any practices of fraud, and is not diminiſhed by the lapſe of ages. Biſhop Burnet, in the hiſtory of his own times, inſerts various extracts from Lord Clarendon's hiſtory. *One* ſuch inſertion is a proof, that Lord Clarendon's hiſtory was extant at the time when Biſhop Burnet wrote, that it had been read by Biſhop Burnet, that it was received by Biſhop Burnet as a work of Lord Clarendon's, and alſo regarded by him as an authentic account of the tranſactions which it relates: and it will be a proof of theſe points a thouſand years hence, or as long as the books exiſt. Juvenal having quoted, as Cicero's, that memorable line,

"O fortunatam natam me conſule Romam,"

the quotation would be ſtrong evidence, were there any doubt, that the oration in which that line is found, actually came from Cicero's pen. Theſe inſtances, however ſimple, may ſerve to point out to a reader, who is little accuſtomed to ſuch reſearches, the nature and value of the argument.

The teſtimonies which we have to bring forward under this propoſition are the following.

I. There is extant an epiſtle aſcribed to Barnabas,[a] the companion of Paul. It is quoted as the epiſtle of Barnabas by Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194; by Origen, A. D. 230. It is mentioned by Euſebius, A. D. 315, and by Jerome, A. D. 392, as an ancient work in their time, bearing the name of Barnabas, and as well known and read amongſt Chriſtians, though not accounted a part of ſcripture. It purports to have been written ſoon after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, during the

[a] Lardner's Cred. ed. 1755, vol. I. p. 23, et ſeq. The reader will obſerve from the references that the materials of theſe ſections are almoſt entirely extracted from Dr. Lardner's work—my office conſiſted in arrangement and ſelection.

calamities which followed that diſaſter ; and it bears the character of the age to which it profeſſes to belong.

In this epiſtle appears the following remarkable paſſage : "Let us therefore, beware leſt it come upon us, *as it is written*, there are many called, few choſen." From the expreſſion, "as it is written," we infer with certainty, that, at the time when the author of this epiſtle lived there was a book extant, well known to Chriſtians, and of authority amongſt them containing theſe words—"many are called, few choſen." Such a book is our preſent goſpel of St. Matthew, in which this text is twice found, and is found in no other book now known. There is a farther obſervation to be made upon the terms of the quotation. The writer of the epiſtle was a Jew. The phraſe "it is written," was the very form in which the Jews quoted their ſcriptures. It is not probable, therefore, that he would have uſed this phraſe, and without qualification, of any books but what had acquired a kind of ſcriptural authority. If the paſſage remarked in this ancient writing had been found in one of St. Paul's epiſtles, it would have been eſteemed by every one a high teſtimony to St. Matthew's goſpel. It ought therefore to be remembered, that the writing in which it *is* found was probably by very few years poſterior to thoſe of St. Paul.

Beſide this paſſage, there are alſo in the epiſtle before us ſeveral others, in which the ſentiment is the ſame with what we meet with in St. Matthew's goſpel, and two or three in which we recognize the ſame words. In particular, the author of the epiſtle repeats the precept, "give to every one that aſketh thee," and ſaith that Chriſt choſe as his apoſtles, who were to preach the goſpel, men who were great ſinners, that he might ſhow that he came, "not to call the righteous, but ſinners, to repentance."

II. We are in poſſeſſion of an epiſtle written by Clement, Biſhop of Rome,[a] whom ancient writers, without any doubt or ſcruple, aſſert to have been the Clement whom St. Paul mentions, Phil. iv. 3, "with *Clement* alſo, and other my fellow-labourers, whoſe names are in the book of life." This epiſtle is ſpoken of by the ancients as an epiſtle acknowledged by all ; and, as Irenæus well repreſents its value, "written by Clement, who had ſeen the bleſſed apoſtles and converſed with them, who had the preaching of the apoſtles ſtill ſounding in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes." It is addreſſed to the

a Ib. vol. I. p. 62, et ſeq.

church of Corinth; and what alone may ſeem almoſt deciſive of its authenticity, Dyoniſius, Biſhop of Corinth, about the year 170, i. e. about eighty or ninety years after the epiſtle was written, bears witneſs, "that it had been wont to be read in that church from ancient times."

This epiſtle affords, amongſt others, the following valuable paſſages:—"Eſpecially remembering the words of the Lord Jeſus which he ſpake, teaching gentleneſs and long ſuffering; for thus he ſaid;[a] Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven unto you; as you do, ſo ſhall it be done unto you; as you give, ſo ſhall it be given unto you; as ye judge, ſo ſhall ye be judged; as ye ſhow kindneſs, ſo ſhall kindneſs be ſhown unto you; with what meaſure ye mete, with the ſame it ſhall be meaſured to you. By this command, and by theſe rules, let us eſtabliſh ourſelves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words."

Again, "Remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, for he ſaid, Woe to that man by whom offences come; it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he ſhould offend one of my elect; it were better for him that a mill-ſtone ſhould be tied about his neck, and that he ſhould be drowned in the ſea, than that he ſhould offend one of my little ones."[b]

In both theſe paſſages we perceive the high reſpect paid to the words of Chriſt as recorded by the evangeliſts: "*Remember* the words of the Lord Jeſus—by this command and by theſe rules let us eſtabliſh ourſelves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words." We perceive alſo in Clement a total unconſciouſneſs of doubt, whether theſe were the real words of Chriſt, which are read as ſuch in the goſpels. This obſervation indeed belongs to the whole ſeries of teſtimony, and eſpecially to the moſt ancient part of it. Whenever any

[a] "Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy." Matt. v. 7.—"Forgive, and ye ſhall be forgiven; give, and it ſhall be given unto you." Luke vi. 37, 38.—"Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged, and with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again." Matt. vii. 2.

[b] Matt. xviii. 6. "But whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-ſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were caſt into the ſea." The latter part of the paſſage in Clement agrees more exactly with Luke xvii. 2. "It were better for him that a mill-ſtone were hanged about his neck, and he caſt into the ſea, than that he ſhould offend one of theſe little ones."

thing now read in the goſpels is met with in an early Chriſtian writing, it is always obſerved to ſtand there as acknowledged truth, i. e. to be introduced without heſitation, doubt, or apology. It is to be obſerved alſo, that as this epiſtle was written in the name of the church of Rome, and addreſſed to the church of Corinth, it ought to be taken as exhibiting the judgment not only of Clement, who drew up the letter, but of theſe churches themſelves, at leaſt as to the authority of the books referred to.

It may be ſaid, that, as Clement hath not uſed words of quotation, it is not certain that he refers to any book whatever. The words of Chriſt, which he has put down, he might himſelf have heard from the apoſtles, or might have received through the ordinary medium of oral tradition. This hath been ſaid; but that no ſuch inference can be drawn from the abſence of words of quotation is proved by the three following conſiderations: Firſt, that Clement, in the very ſame manner, namely, without any mark of reference, uſes a paſſage now found in the epiſtle to the Romans;[a] which paſſage, from the peculiarity of the words which compoſe it, and from their order, it is manifeſt that he muſt have taken from the book. The ſame remark may be repeated of ſome very ſingular ſentiments in the epiſtle to the Hebrews. Secondly, that there are many ſentences of St. Paul's firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, ſtanding in Clement's epiſtles without any ſign of quotation, which yet certainly are quotations; becauſe it appears that Clement had St. Paul's epiſtle before him inaſmuch as in one place he mentions it in terms too expreſs to leave us in any doubt—"Take into your hands the epiſtle of the bleſſed apoſtle Paul." Thirdly, that this method of adopting words of ſcripture, without reference or acknowledgment, was, as will appear in the ſequel, a method in general uſe amongſt the moſt ancient Chriſtian writers; theſe analogies not only repel the objection, but caſt the preſumption on the other ſide; and afford a conſiderable degree of poſitive proof that the words in queſtion have been borrowed from the places of ſcripture in which we now find them.

But take it if you will the other way, that Clement had heard theſe words from the apoſtles or firſt teachers of Chriſtianity; with reſpect to the preciſe point of our argument, viz. that the ſcriptures contain what the apoſtles taught, this ſuppoſition may ſerve almoſt as well.

[a] Rom. i. 29.

III. Near the concluſion of the epiſtle to the Romans, St. Paul, amongſt others, ſends the following ſalutation: "Salute Aſyncritus, Phlegon, *Hermas*, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them."

Of Hermas, who appears in this catalogue of Roman Chriſtians as contemporary with St. Paul, a book bearing the name, and (it is moſt probable) rightly, is ſtill remaining. It is called the Shepherd or Paſtor of Hermas.[a] Its antiquity is inconteſtible, from the quotations of it in Irenæus, A. D. 178, Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194, Tertullian, A. D. 200, Origen, A. D. 230. The notes of time extant in the epiſtle itſelf agree with its title, and with the teſtimonies concerning it, for it purports to have been written during the life-time of Clement.

In this piece are tacit alluſions to St. Matthew's, St. Luke's and St. John's goſpels, that is to ſay, there are applications of thoughts and expreſſions found in theſe goſpels, without citing the place or writer from which they were taken. In this form appear in Hermas the confeſſing and denying of Chriſt; the parable of the ſeed ſown; the compariſon of Chriſt's diſciples to little children; the ſaying, "he that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery." The ſingular expreſſion, "having received all power from his father," in probable alluſion to Matt. xxviii. 18, and Chriſt being the "gate," or only way of coming, "to God," in plain alluſion to John xiv. 6—x. 7, 9. There is alſo a probable alluſion to Acts v. 32.

This piece is the repreſentation of a viſion, and has by many been accounted a weak and fanciful performance. I therefore obſerve, that the character of the writing has little to do with the purpoſe for which we adduce it. It is the age in which it was compoſed that gives the value to its teſtimony.

IV. Ignatius, as it is teſtified by ancient Chriſtian writers, became Biſhop of Antioch about thirty-ſeven years after Chriſt's aſcenſion; and therefore, from his time, and place, and ſtation, it is probable that he had known and converſed with many of the apoſtles. Epiſtles of Ignatius are referred to by Polycarp his contemporary. Paſſages, found in the epiſtles now extant under his name, are quoted by Irenæus, A. D. 178; by Origen, A. D. 230; and the occaſion of writing the epiſtle is given at

[a] Lardner's Cred. vol. I. p. 111.

large by Eusebius and Jerome. What are called the smaller epistles of Ignatius are generally deemed to be those which were read by Irenæus, Origen, and Eusebius.[a]

In these epistles are various undoubted allusions to the gospels of St. Matthew and St. John; yet so far of the same form with those in the preceding articles, that, like them, they are not accompanied with marks of quotation.

Of these allusions the following are clear specimens:

Matt.[b]
- "Christ was baptized of John, that *all righteousness might be fulfilled by him.*"
- "*Be ye wise as serpents* in all things, and *harmless as a dove.*"

John.[c]
- "Yet the Spirit is not deceived, being from God; for it knows *whence it comes, and whither it goes.*"
- "He (Christ) is the *door* of the Father, by which *enter in* Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the apostles and the church."

As to the manner of quotation, this is observable:—Ignatius, in one place, speaks of St. Paul in terms of high respect, and quotes his epistle to the Ephesians by name; yet in several other places he borrows words and sentiments from the same epistle without mentioning it: which shews, that this was his general manner of using and applying writings then extant, and then of high authority.

V. Polycarp[d] had been taught by the apostles; had conversed with many who had seen Christ; was also by the apostles appointed Bishop of Smyrna. This testimony concerning Polycarp is given by Irenæus, who in his youth had seen him. "I can tell the place," saith Irenæus, "in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and the discourses

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 147.

[b] iii. 15. "For thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness."
xi. 16. "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

[c] iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell *whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."
x. 9. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved."

[d] Ib. vol. I. p. 192.

he made to the people, and how he related his converſation with John and others who had ſeen the Lord, and how he related their ſayings, and what he had heard concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrine, as he had received them from the eye-witneſſes of the word of life; all which Polycarp related agreeable to the ſcriptures."

Of Polycarp, whoſe proximity to the age and country, and perſons of the apoſtles, is thus atteſted, we have one undoubted epiſtle remaining. And this, though a ſhort letter, contains nearly forty clear alluſions to books of the New Teſtament; which is ſtrong evidence of the reſpect which Chriſtians of that age bore for theſe books.

Amongſt theſe, although the writings of St. Paul are more frequently uſed by Polycarp than other parts of ſcripture, there are copious alluſions to the goſpel of St. Matthew, ſome to paſſages found in the goſpels both of Matthew and Luke, and ſome which more nearly reſemble the words in Luke.

I ſelect the following, as fixing the authority of the Lord's prayer, and the uſe of it amongſt the primitive Chriſtians, "if therefore we *pray* the Lord that he *will forgive us, we ought alſo to forgive.*"

"With ſupplication *beſeeching* the all-ſeeing God *not to lead us into temptation.*"

And the following, for the ſake of repeating an obſervation already made, that words of our Lord, found in our goſpels, were at this early day quoted as ſpoken by him; and not only ſo, but quoted with ſo little queſtion or conſciouſneſs of doubt, about their being really his words, as not even to mention, much leſs to canvaſs, the authority from which they were taken.

"But remembering what the Lord ſaid, teaching, judge not, that ye be not judged; forgive, and ye ſhall be forgiven; be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again."

Suppoſing Polycarp to have had theſe words from the books in which we now find them, it is manifeſt that theſe books were conſidered by him, and, as he thought, conſidered by his readers, as authentic accounts of Chriſt's diſcourſes; and that that point was inconteſtible.

The following is a deciſive, though what we call a tacit, reference to St. Peter's ſpeech in the acts of the apoſtles:— "whom God hath raiſed, having looſed the pains of death."

VI. Papias,[a] a hearer of John, and companion of Polycarp, as Irenæus atteſts, and of that age, as all agree, in a paſſage quoted by Euſebius, from a work now loſt, expreſsly aſcribes the reſpective goſpels to Matthew and Mark; and in a manner which proves that theſe goſpels muſt have publickly borne the names of theſe authors at that time, and probably long before; for Papias does not ſay, that one goſpel was written by Matthew, and another by Mark, but, aſſuming this as perfectly well known, he tells us from what materials Mark collected his account, viz. from Peter's preaching, and in what language Matthew wrote, viz. in Hebrew. Whether Papias was well informed in this ſtatement or not, to the point for which I produce his teſtimony, namely, that theſe books bore theſe names at this time, his authority is complete.

VII. The writers hitherto alleged, had all lived and converſed with ſome of the apoſtles. The works of theirs which remain, are in general very ſhort pieces, yet rendered extremely valuable by their antiquity; and none, ſhort as they are, but what contain ſome important teſtimony to our hiſtorical ſcriptures.[b]

Not long after theſe, that is, not much more than twenty years after the laſt, follows Juſtin Martyr.[c] His remaining works are much larger than any that have yet been noticed. Although the nature of his two principal writings, one of which was addreſſed to heathens, and the other was a conference with a Jew, did not lead him to ſuch frequent appeals to Chriſtian books, as would have appeared in a diſcourſe intended for Chriſtian readers; we nevertheleſs reckon up in them between twenty and thirty quotations of the goſpels and acts of the apoſ-

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 239.

[b] That the quotations are more thinly ſtrown in theſe, than in the writings of the next, and of ſucceeding ages is, in a good meaſure, accounted for by the obſervation, that the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament had not *yet*, nor by their recency hardly could have become a general part of Chriſtian education; read, as the Old Teſtament was, by Jews and Chriſtians from their childhood, and thereby intimately mixing, as that had long done, with all their religious ideas, and with their language upon religious ſubjects. In proceſs of time, and as ſoon perhaps as could be expected, this came to be the caſe. And when we perceive the effect, in a proportionably greater frequency, as well as copiouſneſs of alluſion.*

[c] Ib. vol. I. p. 258.

* *Mich. Intr. c. ii. ſect. vi.*

tles, certain, distinct, and copious; if each verse be counted separately, a much greater number; if each expression, a very great one.[a]

We meet with quotations of three of the gospels within the compass of half a page: "and in other words he says, Depart from me into outer darkness, which the Father hath prepared for Satan and his angels" (which is from Matthew xxv. 41.) "And again he said in other words, I give unto you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and venomous beasts, and upon all the power of the enemy." (This from Luke x. 19.) "And before he was crucified, he said, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the Scribes and Pharisees, and be crucified, and rise again the third day. (This from Mark viii. 31.)

In another place Justin quotes a passage in the history of Christ's birth, as delivered by Matthew and John, and fortifies his quotation by this remarkable testimony; "as they have taught, who have writ the history of all things concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ; and we believe them."

Quotations also are found from the gospel of St. John.

What, moreover, seems extremely material to be observed, is, that in all Justin's works, from which might be extracted almost a complete life of Christ, there are but two instances, in which he refers to any thing as said or done by Christ, which is not related concerning him in our present gospels: which shews, that these gospels, and these we may say, alone, were the authorities from which the Christians of that day drew the information upon which they depended. One of these instances is of a saying of Christ not met with in any book now extant.[b] The other of a circumstance in Christ's baptism, namely, a fiery or luminous appearance upon the water, which, according to Epi-

[a] "He cites our present canon, and particularly our four gospels continually, I dare say, above two hundred times." Jones's new and full method. Appen. vol. I. p. 539, ed. 1726.

[b] "Wherefore also our Lord Jesus Christ has said, In whatsoever I shall find you, in the same I will also judge you." Possibly Justin designed not to quote any text, but to represent the sense of many of our Lord's sayings. Fabricius has observed, that this saying has been quoted by many writers, and that Justin is the only one who ascribes it to our Lord, and that perhaps by a slip of his memory.

Words resembling these are read repeatedly in Ezekiel; "I will judge them according to their ways." (vii. 3. xxxiii. 20.) It is re-

phanius, is noticed in the gospel of the Hebrews; and which might be true; but which, whether true or false, is mentioned by Justin, with a plain mark of diminution, when compared with what he quotes as resting upon scripture authority. The reader will advert to this distinction; "and then, when Jesus came to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, as Jesus descended into the water, a fire also was kindled in Jordan; and when he came up out of the water, *the apostles of this our Christ have writ*, that the Holy Ghost lighted upon him as a dove."

All the references in Justin are made without mentioning the author; which proves that these books were perfectly notorious, and that there were no other accounts of Christ then extant, or, at least, no others so received and credited, as to make it necessary to distinguish these from the rest.

But although Justin mentions not the authors' names, he calls the books, "Memoirs composed by the apostles," "Memoirs composed by the apostles and their companions;" which descriptions, the latter especially, exactly suit with the titles which the gospels and Acts of the apostles now bear.

VIII. Hegesippus[a] came about thirty years after Justin. His testimony is remarkable only for this particular; that he relates of himself, that, travelling from Palestine to Rome, he visited upon his journey many bishops; and that "in every succession, and in every city, the same doctrine is taught, which the law, and the prophets, and the *Lord* teacheth." This is an important attestation, from good authority, and of high antiquity. It is generally understood that by the word "Lord," Hegesippus intended some writing or writings, containing the teaching of Christ, in which sense alone, the term combines with the other terms "law and prophet," which denote writings; and together with them admits of the verb "preacheth," in the present tense. Then that these writings were some or all of the books of the New Testament, is rendered probable from hence, that, in the fragments of his works, which are

markable that Justin had but just before expressly quoted Ezekiel. Mr. Jones upon this circumstance founded a conjecture, that Justin writ only "the Lord hath said," intending to quote the words of God, or rather the sense of those words, in Ezekiel, and that some transcriber, imagining these to be the words of Christ, inserted in his copy the addition "Jesus Christ." Vol. I. p. 539.

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 314.

preſerved in Euſebius, and in a writer of the ninth century, enough, though it be little, is left to ſhow, that Hegeſippus expreſſed divers things in the ſtyle of the goſpels, and of the Acts of the apoſtles; that he referred to the hiſtory in the ſecond chapter of Matthew, and recited a text of that goſpel as ſpoken by our Lord.

IX. At this time, viz. about the year 170, the churches of Lyons and Vienne in France ſent a relation of the ſufferings of their martyrs to the churches of Aſia and Phrygia.[a] The epiſtle is preſerved entire by Euſebius. And what carries in ſome meaſure the teſtimony of theſe churches to a higher age is, that they had now for their biſhop Pothinus, who was ninety years old, and whoſe early life conſequently muſt have immediately joined on with the times of the apoſtles. In this epiſtle are exact references to the goſpels of Luke and John, and to the Acts of the apoſtles. The form of reference the ſame as in all the preceding articles. That from St. John is in theſe words: "Then was fulfilled that which was ſpoken by the Lord, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God ſervice."[b]

X. The evidence now opens upon us full and clear. Irenæus[c] ſucceeded Pothinus as biſhop of Lyons. In his youth he had been a diſciple of Polycarp, who was a diſciple of John. In the time in which he lived, he was diſtant not much more than a century from the publication of the goſpels; in his inſtruction, only by one ſtep ſeparated from the perſons of the apoſtles. He aſſerts of himſelf and his contemporaries, that they were able to reckon up, in all the principal churches, the ſucceſſion of biſhops from the firſt.[d] I remark theſe particulars concerning Irenæus with more formality than uſual; becauſe the teſtimony which this writer affords to the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, to their authority, and to the titles which they bear, is expreſs, poſitive, and excluſive. One principal paſſage, in which this teſtimony is contained, opens with a preciſe aſſertion of the point which we have laid down as the foundation of our argument, viz. that the ſtory which the goſpels exhibit is the ſtory which the apoſtles told. "We have not received," ſaith Irenæus, "the knowledge of the way of our ſalvation by any others than thoſe by whom the goſpel has been brought to us. Which goſpel they firſt preach-

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 332. [b] John xvi. 2.
[c] Ib. vol. I. p. 344. [d] Adv. Hæreſ. l. 3 c. 3.

ed, and afterwards by the will of God committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith.—For after that our Lord roſe from the dead, and they (the apoſtles) were endowed from above with the power of the Holy Ghoſt coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They then went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the bleſſing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike, the goſpel of God. Matthew then, among the Jews, writ a goſpel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the goſpel at Rome, and founding a church there. And after their exit, Mark alſo, the diſciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter. And Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the goſpel preached by him (Paul.) Afterwards John, the diſciple of the Lord, who alſo leaned upon his breaſt, he likewiſe publiſhed a goſpel while he dwelt at Epheſus in Aſia." If any modern divine ſhould write a book upon the genuineneſs of the goſpels, he could not aſſert it more expreſsly, or ſtate their original more diſtinctly, than Irenæus hath done within little more than a hundred years after they were publiſhed.

The correſpondency, in the days of Irenæus, of the oral and written tradition, and the deduction of the oral tradition through various channels from the age of the apoſtles, which was then lately paſſed, and, by conſequence, the probability that the books truly delivered what the apoſtles taught, is inferred alſo with ſtrict regularity from another paſſage of his works. "The tradition of the apoſtles (this father ſaith) hath ſpread itſelf over the whole univerſe; and all they who ſearch after the ſources of truth, will find this tradition to be held ſacred in every church. We might enumerate all thoſe who have been appointed biſhops to theſe churches by the apoſtles, and all their ſucceſſors, up to our day. It is by this uninterrupted ſucceſſion that we have received the tradition which actually exiſts in the church, as alſo the doctrines of truth, as it was preached by the apoſtles."[a] The reader will obſerve upon this, that the ſame Irenæus, who is now ſtating the ſtrength and uniformity of the tradition, we have before ſeen recognizing, in the fulleſt manner, the authority of the written records; from which we are entitled to conclude, that they were then conformable to each other.

[a] Ir. in Hær. l. iii. c. 3.

I have ſaid, that the teſtimony of Irenæus in favour of our goſpels is *excluſive* of all others. I allude to a remarkable paſſage in his works, in which, for ſome reaſons ſufficiently fanciful, he endeavours to ſhow, that there could be neither more nor fewer goſpels than *four*. With his argument we have no concern. The poſition itſelf proves that four and only four goſpels were at that time publickly read and acknowledged. That theſe were our goſpels, and in the ſtate in which we now have them, is ſhown from many other places of this writer beſide that which we have already alleged. He mentions how Matthew begins his goſpel, how Mark begins and ends his, and their ſuppoſed reaſons for ſo doing. He enumerates at length the ſeveral paſſages of Chriſt's hiſtory in Luke, which are not found in any of the other evangeliſts. He ſtates the particular deſign with which St. John compoſed his goſpel, and accounts for the doctrinal declarations which precede the narrative.

To the book of the Acts of the apoſtles, its author and credit, the teſtimony of Irenæus is no leſs explicit. Referring to the account of St. Paul's converſion and vocation in the ninth chapter of that book, "Nor can they (ſays he, meaning the parties with whom he argues) ſhow that he is not to be credited, who has related to us the truth with the greateſt exactneſs." In another place, he has accurately collected the ſeveral texts, in which the writer of the hiſtory is repreſented as accompanying St. Paul, which leads him to deliver a ſummary of almoſt the whole of the laſt twelve chapters of the book.

In an author, thus abounding with references and alluſions to the ſcriptures, there is not one to any apochryphal Chriſtian writing whatever. This is a broad line of diſtinction between our ſacred books, and the pretenſions of all others.

The force of the teſtimony of the period which we have conſidered, is greatly ſtrengthened by the obſervation, that it is the teſtimony, and the concurring teſtimony, of writers who lived in countries remote from one another. Clement flouriſhed at Rome, Ignatius at Antioch, Polycarp at Smyrna, Juſtin Martyr in Syria, and Irenæus in France.

XI. Omitting Athenagoras and Theophilus, who lived about this time ;[a] in the remaining works of the former of whom are clear references to Mark and Luke ; and in the works of the latter who was biſhop of Antioch, the ſixth in ſucceſſion from the apoſtles, evident alluſions to Matthew and John, and

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 400.—Ib. 422.

probable allusions to Luke (which, considering the nature of the compositions, that they were addressed to heathen readers, is as much as could be expected;) observing also, that the works of two learned Christian writers of the same age, Miltiades and Pantænus,[a] are now lost; of which Miltiades Eusebius records, that his writings "were monuments of zeal for the divine oracles;" and which Pantænus, as Jerome testifies, was a man of prudence and learning, both in the divine scriptures and secular literature, and had left many commentaries upon the holy scriptures then extant: passing by these without further remark, we come to one of the most voluminous of ancient Christian writers, Clement of Alexandria.[b] Clement followed Irenæus at the distance of only sixteen years, and therefore may be said to maintain the series of testimony in an uninterrupted continuation.

In certain of Clement's works, now lost, but of which various parts are recited by Eusebius, there is given a distinct account of the order in which the four gospels were written. The gospels, which contain the genealogies, were (he says) written first, Mark's next, at the instance of Peter's followers, and John's the last; and this account (he tells us) that he had received from Presbyters of more ancient times. This testimony proves the following points; that these gospels were the histories of Christ then publickly received, and relied upon; that the dates, occasions, and circumstances of their publication, were at that time subjects of attention and inquiry amongst Christians. In the works of Clement which remain, the four gospels are repeatedly quoted by the names of their authors, and the Acts of the apostles is expressly ascribed to Luke. In one place, after mentioning a particular circumstance, he adds these remarkable words: "We have not this passage *in the four gospels delivered to us*, but in that according to the Egyptians;" which puts a marked distinction between the four gospels and all other histories, or pretended histories, of Christ. In another part of his works, the perfect confidence with which he received the gospels, is signified by him in these words: "That this is true appears from hence, that it is written in the gospel according to St. Luke;" and again, "I need not use many words, but only to allege the evangelic voice of the Lord." His quotations are numerous. The sayings of Christ, of which he alleges many, are all taken from our gospels, the single ex-

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 418, 450. [b] Ib. vol. II. p. 469.

ception to this observation appearing to be a loose[a] quotation of a passage in St. Matthew's gospel.

XII. In the age in which they lived,[b] Tertullian joins on with Clement. The number of the gospels then received, the names of the evangelists, and their proper descriptions, are exhibited by this writer in one short sentence:—"Among the *apostles*, John and Matthew teach us the faith; among *apostolical men*, Luke and Mark refresh it." The next passage to be taken from Tertullian, affords as complete an attestation to the authenticity of our books, as can be well imagined. After enumerating the churches which had been founded by Paul, at Corinth, in Galatia, at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Ephesus; the church of Rome established by Peter and Paul; and other churches derived from John; he proceeds thus:—"I say then, that with them, but not with them only which are apostolical, but with all who have fellowship with them in the same faith, is that gospel of Luke received from its first publication, which we so zealously maintain:" and presently afterwards adds—"The same authority of the apostolical churches will support the other gospels, which we have from them, and according to them, I mean John's and Matthew's, although that likewise, which Mark published, may be said to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was." In another place Tertullian affirms, that the three other gospels were in the hands of the churches from the beginning, as well as Luke's. This noble testimony fixes the universality with which the gospels were received, and their antiquity; that they were in the hands of all, and had been so from the first. And this evidence appears not more than one hundred and fifty years after the publication of the books. The reader must be given to understand that when Tertullian speaks of maintaining or defending (tuendi) the gospel of St. Luke, he only means maintaining or defending the integrity of the copies of

[a] "Ask great things, and the small shall be added unto you." Clement rather chose to expound the words of Matthew (vi. 33) than literally to cite them; and this is most undeniably proved by another place in the same Clement, where he both produces the text and these words as an exposition:—"Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, for these are the great things; but the small things, and things relating to this life, shall be added unto you." Jones's New and Full Method, vol. I. p. 553.

[b] Ib. vol. II. p. 561.

Luke received by Chriſtian churches, in oppoſition to certain curtailed copies uſed by Marcion, againſt whom he writes.

This author frequently cites the Acts of the apoſtles under that title, once calls it Luke's commentary, and obſerves how St. Paul's epiſtles confirm it.

After this general evidence, it is unneceſſary to add particular quotations. Theſe, however, are ſo numerous and ample, as to have led Dr. Lardner to obſerve, "that there are more, and larger quotations of the ſmall volume of the New Teſtament in this one Chriſtian author, than there are of all the works of Cicero in writers of all characters for ſeveral ages."[a]

Tertullian quotes no Chriſtian writing as of equal authority with the ſcriptures, and no ſpurious book at all; a broad line of diſtinction, we may once more obſerve, between our ſacred books and all others.

We may again likewiſe remark the wide extent through which the reputation of the goſpels, and of the Acts of the apoſtles, had ſpread, and the perfect conſent in this point of diſtant and independent ſocieties. It is now only about one hundred and fifty years ſince Chriſt was crucified; and within this period, to ſay nothing of the apoſtolical fathers who have been noticed already, we have Juſtin Martyr at Neapolis, Theophilus at Antioch, Irenæus in France, Clement at Alexandria, Tertullian at Carthage, quoting the ſame books of hiſtorical ſcriptures, and, I may ſay, quoting theſe alone.

XIII. An interval of only thirty years, and that occupied by no ſmall number of Chriſtian writers,[b] whoſe works only remain in fragments and quotations, and in every one of which is ſome reference or other to the goſpels (and in one of them (Hippolitus, as preſerved in Theodoret) is an abſtract of the whole goſpel hiſtory) brings us to a name of great celebrity in Chriſtian antiquity, Origen[c] of Alexandria, who, in the quantity of his writings, exceeded the moſt laborious of the Greek and Latin authors. Nothing can be more peremptory upon the ſubject now under conſideration, and, from a writer of his learning and information, more ſatisfactory, than the declaration of Origen, preſerved, in an extract from his works, by

[a] Ib. p. 647.

[b] Minucius Felix, Appollonius, Caius, Aſterius, Urbanus, Alexander biſhop of Jeruſalem, Hippolitus, Ammonius, Julius Africanus.

[c] Ib. vol. III. p. 234.

Eusebius: "That the four gospels alone, are received without dispute, by the whole church of God under heaven;" to which declaration is immediately subjoined a brief history of the respective authors, to whom they were then, as they are now, ascribed. The language holden concerning the gospels throughout the works of Origen which remain, entirely correspond with the testimony here cited. His attestation to the Acts of the apostles is no less positive: "And Luke also once more sounds the trumpet relating the Acts of the apostles." The universality with which the scriptures were then read, is well signified by this writer, in a passage in which he has occasion to observe against Celsus, "that it is not in any private books, or such as are read by a few only, and those studious persons, but in books read by every body, that it is written, the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by things that are made." It is to no purpose to single out quotations of scripture from such a writer as this. We might as well make a selection of the quotations of scripture in Dr. Clark's sermons. They are so thickly sown in the works of Origen, that Dr. Mill says, "If we had all his works remaining, we should have before us almost the whole text of the bible."[a]

Origen notices, in order to censure, certain apocryphal gospels. He also uses four writings of this sort; that is, throughout his large works he once or twice, at the most, quotes each of the four; but always with some mark, either of direct reprobation, or of caution to his readers, manifestly esteeming them of little or of no authority.

XIV. Gregory, bishop of Neocæsarea, and Dionysius of Alexandria, were scholars of Origen. Their testimony therefore, though full and particular, may be reckoned a repetition only of his. The series, however, of evidence, is continued by Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who flourished within twenty years after Origen. "The church (says this father) is watered, like paradise, by four rivers, that is, by four gospels." The Acts of the apostles is also frequently quoted by Cyprian, under that name, and under the name of the "divine scriptures." In his various writings are such constant and copious citations of scripture, as to place this part of the testimony beyond controversy. Nor is there, in the works of this eminent African bishop, one quotation of a spurious or apocryphal Christian writing.

[a] Mill, proleg. cap. vi. p. 66.

XV. Passing over a crowd[a] of writers following Cyprian, at different distances, but all within forty years of his time, and who all, in the imperfect remains of their works, either cite the historical scriptures of the New Testament, or speak of them in terms of profound respect; I single out Victorin, bishop of Pettaw in Germany, merely on account of the remoteness of his situation from that of Origen and Cyprian, who were Africans; by which circumstance, his testimony, taken in conjunction with theirs, proves that the scripture histories, and the same histories, were known and received from one side of the Christian world to the other. This bishop[b] lived about the year 290; and in a commentary upon this text of the Revelations, "The first was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third like a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle," he makes out that by the four creatures are intended the four gospels, and to show the propriety of the symbols, he recites the subject with which each evangelist opens his history. The explication is fanciful, but the testimony positive. He also expressly cites the Acts of the apostles.

XVI. Arnobius and Lactantius,[c] about the year 300, composed formal arguments upon the credibility of the Christian religion. As these arguments were addressed to Gentiles, the authors abstain from quoting Christian books by *name*, one of them giving this very reason for his reserve; but when they come to state, for the information of their readers, the outlines of Christ's history, it is apparent that they draw their accounts from our gospels, and from no other sources; for these statements exhibit a summary of almost every thing which is related of Christ's actions and miracles by the four evangelists. Arnobius vindicates, without mentioning their names, the credit of these historians, observing that they were eye-witnesses of the facts which they relate, and that their ignorance of the arts of composition was rather a confirmation of their testimony, than an objection to it. Lactantius also argues in defence of the religion, from the consistency, simplicity, disinterestedness, and sufferings of the Christian historians, meaning by that term our evangelists.

[a] Novatus, Rome, A. D. 251. Dionysius, Rome, A. D. 259. Commodian, A. D. 270. Anatolius, Laodicea, A. D. 270. Theognostus, A. D. 282. Methodius, Lycia, A. D. 290. Phileas, Egypt, 296.

[b] Ib. vol. V. p. 214. [c] Ib. vol. VII. p. 43, 201.

XVII. We close the series of testimonies with that of Eusebius,[a] bishop of Cæsarea, who flourished in the year 315, contemporary with, or posterior only by fifteen years, to the two authors last cited. This voluminous writer, and most diligent collector of the writings of others, beside a variety of large works, composed a history of the affairs of Christianity from its origin to his own time. His testimony to the scriptures is the testimony of a man much conversant in the works of Christian authors, written during the three first centuries of its era; and who had read many which are now lost. In a passage of his evangelical demonstration, Eusebius remarks, with great nicety, the delicacy of two of the evangelists, in their manner of noticing any circumstance which regarded themselves, and of Mark, as writing under Peter's direction, in the circumstances which regarded him. The illustration of this remark leads him to bring together long quotations from each of the evangelists; and the whole passage is a proof, that Eusebius, and the Christians of those days, not only read the gospels, but studied them with attention and exactness. In a passage of his ecclesiastical history, he treats, in form, and at large, of the occasions of writing the four gospels, and of the order in which they were written. The title of the chapter is "Of the Order of the Gospels;" and it begins thus; "Let us observe the writings of this apostle John, which are not contradicted by any; and, first of all, must be mentioned, as acknowledged by all, the gospel according to him, well known to all the churches under heaven; and that it has been justly placed by the ancients the fourth in order, and after the other three, may be made evident in this manner." Eusebius then proceeds to show that John wrote the last of the four, and that his gospel was intended to supply the omissions of the others, especially in the part of our Lord's ministry, which took place before the imprisonment of John the Baptist. He observes, "that the apostles of Christ were not studious of the ornaments of composition, nor indeed forward to write at all, being wholly occupied with their ministry."

This learned author makes no use at all of Christian writings, forged with the names of Christ's apostles, or their companions.

We close this branch of our evidence here; because, after Eusebius, there is no room for any question upon the subject, the works of Christian writers being as full of texts of scripture,

[a] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 33.

and of references to ſcripture, as the diſcourſes of modern divines. Future teſtimonies to the books of ſcripture could only prove that they never loſt their character or authority.

SECT. II.

When the ſcriptures are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted with peculiar reſpect, as books ſui generis, *as poſſeſſing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as concluſive in all queſtions and controverſies among ſt Chriſtians.*

BESIDES the general ſtrain of reference and quotation which uniformly and ſtrongly indicates this diſtinction, the following may be regarded as ſpecific teſtimonies.

I. Theophilus,[a] biſhop of Antioch, the ſixth in ſucceſſion from the apoſtles, and who flouriſhed little more than a century after the books of the New Teſtament were written, having occaſion to quote one of our goſpels, writes thus: "Theſe things the holy ſcriptures teach us, and all who were moved by the Holy Spirit, among whom John ſays, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." Again—"Concerning the righteouſneſs which the law teaches, the like things are to be found in the prophets and the *goſpels*, becauſe that all being inſpired, ſpoke by one and the ſame Spirit of God."[b] No words can teſtify more ſtrongly than theſe do, the high and peculiar reſpect in which theſe books were holden.

II. A writer againſt Artemon,[c] who may be ſuppoſed to come about one hundred and fifty-eight years after the publication of the ſcriptures, in a paſſage quoted by Euſebius, uſes theſe expreſſions: "Poſſibly what they (our adverſaries) ſay, might have been credited, *if firſt of all* the divine ſcriptures did not contradict them; *and then* the writings of certain brethren, more ancient than the times of Victor." The brethren mentioned by name, are Juſtin Militiades, Tatian, Clement, Irenæus, Melito, with a general appeal to many more not named. This paſſage proves, firſt, that there was at that time a collection called divine ſcriptures; ſecondly, that theſe ſcriptures were eſteemed of higher authority than the writings of the moſt early and celebrated Chriſtians.

[a] Lard. Cred. pr. ii. vol. I. p. 429. [b] Ib. p. 448.

[c] Ib. vol. III. p. 40.

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III. In a piece aſcribed to Hippolitus,[a] who lived near the ſame time, the author profeſſes, in giving his correſpondent inſtruction in the things about which he inquires, "to draw out of the *ſacred fountain*, and to ſet before him from the ſacred ſcriptures, what may afford him ſatisfaction." He then quotes immediately Paul's epiſtles to Timothy, and afterwards many books of the New Teſtament. This preface to the quotations carries in it a marked diſtinction betwixt our ſcriptures and other books.

IV. "*Our* aſſertions and diſcourſes," ſaith Origen,[b] "are unworthy of credit; we muſt receive the *ſcriptures* as witneſſes." After treating of the duty of prayer, he proceeds with his argument thus: "What we have ſaid may be proved from the divine ſcriptures." In his books againſt Celſus, we find this paſſage: "That our religion teaches us to ſeek after wiſdom, ſhall be ſhewn, both out of the ancient Jewiſh ſcriptures which we alſo uſe, and out of thoſe written ſince Jeſus, which are believed in the churches to be divine." Theſe expreſſions afford abundant evidence of the peculiar and excluſive authority which the ſcriptures poſſeſſed.

V. Cyprian, biſhop of Carthage,[c] whoſe age lies cloſe to that of Origen, earneſtly exhorts Chriſtian teachers in all doubtful caſes, "to go back to the *fountain*; and if the truth has in any caſe been ſhaken, to recur to the goſpels and apoſtolic writings." —"The precepts of the goſpel," ſays he in another place, "are nothing leſs than authoritative divine leſſons, the foundations of our hope, the ſupports of our faith, the guides of our way, the ſafeguards of our courſe to heaven."

VI. Novatus,[d] a Roman, contemporary with Cyprian, appeals to the ſcriptures, as the authority by which all errors were to be repelled, and diſputes decided. "That Chriſt is not only man but God alſo, is proved by the ſacred authority of the divine writings."—"The divine ſcripture eaſily detects and confutes the frauds of heretics." "It is not by the fault of the heavenly ſcriptures, which never deceive." Stronger aſſertions than theſe could not be uſed.

VII. At the diſtance of twenty years from the writer laſt cited, Anatolius[e] a learned Alexandrian, and biſhop of Laodicea, ſpeaking of the rule for keeping Eaſter, a queſtion at

[a] Ib. vol. III. p. 112. [b] Ib. p. 287, 288, 289.
[c] Ib. vol. IV. p. 840. [d] Ib. vol. V. p. 102.
[e] Ib. vol. V. p. 146.

that day agitated with much earneſtneſs, ſays of thoſe whom he oppoſed, "they can by no means prove their point by the authority of the divine ſcripture."

VIII. The Arians, who ſprung up about fifty years after this, argued ſtrenuouſly againſt the uſe of the words conſubſtantial and eſſence, and like phraſes; "*becauſe they were not in ſcripture.*"[a] And in the ſame ſtrain, one of their advocates opens a conference with Auguſtine, after the following manner: "If you ſay what is reaſonable, I muſt ſubmit. If you allege any thing from the divine ſcriptures, which are common to both, I muſt hear. But unſcriptural expreſſions (quæ extra ſcripturam ſunt) deſerve no regard."

Athanaſius, the great antagoniſt of Arianiſm, after having enumerated the books of the Old and New Teſtament, adds, "Theſe are the fountains of ſalvation, that he who thirſts may be ſatisfied with the oracles contained in them. In theſe alone the doctrine of ſalvation is proclaimed. Let no man add to them, or take any thing from them."[b]

IX. Cyril, biſhop of Jeruſalem,[c] who wrote about twenty years after the appearance of Arianiſm, uſes theſe remarkable words: "Concerning the divine and holy myſteries of faith, not the leaſt article ought to be delivered without the divine ſcriptures." We are aſſured, that Cyril's ſcriptures were the ſame as ours, for he has left us a catalogue of the books included under that name.

X. Epiphanius,[d] twenty years after Cyril, challenges the Arians, and the followers of Origen, "to produce any paſſage of the Old or New Teſtament, favouring their ſentiments."

XI. Phæbadius, a Gallic biſhop, who lived about thirty years after the council of Nice, teſtifies, that "the biſhops of that council firſt conſulted the ſacred volumes, and then declared their faith."[e]

XII. Baſil, biſhop of Cæſarea, in Cappadocia, contemporary with Epiphanius, ſays, "that hearers inſtructed in the ſcriptures, ought to examine what is ſaid by their teachers, and to embrace what is agreeable to the ſcriptures, and to reject what is otherwiſe."[f]

XIII. Ephraim, the Syrian, a celebrated writer of the ſame times, bears this concluſive teſtimony to the propoſition which

[a] Ib. vol. VII. p. 283, 284. [b] Ib. vol. XII. p. 182.
[c] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 276. [d] Ib. p. 314. [e] Ib. vol. IX p. 52.
[f] Ib. vol. IX. p. 124.

forms the ſubject of our preſent chapter : " The truth written in the ſacred volume of the goſpel, is a perfect rule. Nothing can be taken from it, nor added to it, without great guilt."[a]

XIV. If we add Jerome to theſe, it is only for the evidence which he affords of the judgment of preceding ages. Jerome obſerves, concerning the quotations of *ancient* Chriſtian writers, that is, of writers who were *ancient* in the year 400, that they made a diſtinction between books, ſome they quoted as of authority, and others not : which obſervation relates to the books of ſcripture, compared with other writings, apocryphal or heathen.[b]

Sect. III.

The ſcriptures were in very early times collected into a diſtinct volume.

IGNATIUS, who was biſhop of Antioch within forty years after the aſcenſion, and who had lived and converſed with the apoſtles, ſpeaks of the goſpel and of the apoſtles in terms which render it very probable, that he meant by the goſpel, the book or volume of the goſpels, and by the apoſtles, the book or volume of their epiſtles. His words in one place are,[c] " fleeing to the goſpel as the fleſh of Jeſus, and to the apoſtles as the preſbytery of the church ;" that is, as Le Clerc interprets them, " in order to underſtand the will of God, he fled to the goſpels, which he believed no leſs than if Chriſt in the fleſh had been ſpeaking to him ; and to the writings of the apoſtles, whom he eſteemed as the preſbytery of the whole Chriſtian church." It muſt be obſerved, that about eighty years after this we have direct proof, in the writings of Clement of Alexandria,[d] that theſe two names, " goſpel" and " apoſtles," were the names by which the writings of the New Teſtament, and the diviſion of theſe writings, were uſually expreſſed.

Another paſſage from Ignatius is the following :—" But the goſpel has ſomewhat in it more excellent, the appearance of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, his paſſion, and reſurrection."[e]

[a] Ib. p. 202. [b] Vol. X. p. 123, 124.
[c] Lard. Cred. pr. ii. vol. I. p. 180.
[d] Ib. vol. II. p. 516. [e] Ib. p. 182.

And a third, "Ye ought to hearken to the prophets, but especially to the gospel, in which the passion has been manifested to us, and the resurrection perfected." In this last passage the prophets and the gospel are put in conjunction; and as Ignatius undoubtedly meant by the prophets a collection of writings, it is probable that he meant the same by the gospel, the two terms standing in evident parallelism with each other.

This interpretation of the word "gospel" in the passages above quoted from Ignatius, is confirmed by a piece of nearly equal antiquity, the relation of the martyrdom of Polycarp by the church of Smyrna. "All things," say they, "that went before were done, that the Lord might shew us a martyrdom according to the gospel, for he expected to be delivered up as the Lord also did."[a] And in another place, "we do not commend those who offer themselves, forasmuch as the gospel teaches us no such thing."[b] In both these places, what is called *the gospel* seems to be the history of Jesus Christ, and of his doctrine.

If this be the true sense of the passages, they are not only evidences of our proposition, but strong and very ancient proofs of the high esteem in which the books of the New Testament were holden.

II. Eusebius relates, that Quadratus and some others, who were the immediate successors of the apostles, travelling abroad to preach Christ, carried the gospels with them, and delivered them to their converts. The words of Eusebius are, "then travelling abroad, they performed the work of evangelists, being ambitious to preach Christ, and *deliver the scripture of the divine gospels*."[c] Eusebius had before him the writings both of Quadratus himself, and of many others of that age, which are now lost. It is reasonable, therefore, to believe, that he had good grounds for his assertion. What is thus recorded of the gospels took place within sixty, or at the most seventy, years after they were published; and it is evident, that they must, before this time, and, it is probable, long before this time, have been in general use, and in high esteem in the churches planted by the apostles; inasmuch as they were now, we find, collected into a volume, and the immediate successors of the apostles, they who preached the religion of Christ to those who had not

[a] Ig. Ep c. i. [b] Ib. c. iv.
[c] Lard. Ced. p. ii. vol. I. p. 236.

already heard it, carried the volume with them, and delivered it to their converts.

III. Irenæus, in the year 178,[a] puts the evangelic and apostolic writings in connexion with the law and the prophets, manifestly intending by the one a code or collection of Christian sacred writing, as the other expressed the code or collection of Jewish sacred writings. And

IV. Melito, at this time bishop of Sardis, writing to one Onesimus, tells his correspondent,[b] that he had procured an accurate account of the books of the Old Testament. The occurrence, in this passage, of the term *Old* Testament, has been brought to prove, and it certainly does prove, that there was then a volume or collection of writings called the New Testament.

V. In the time of Clement of Alexandria, about fifteen years after the last quoted testimony, it is apparent that the Christian scriptures were divided into two parts, under the general titles of the gospels and the apostles; and that both these were regarded as of the highest authority. One, out of many expressions of Clement alluding to this distribution, is the following:—"There is a consent and harmony between the law and the prophets, the apostles and the gospel." [c]

VI. The same division, "prophets, gospels, and apostles," appears in Tertullian,[d] the contemporary of Clement. The collection of the gospels is likewise called by this writer the "Evangelic Instrument;"[e] the whole volume, the "New Testament;" and the two parts, the "Gospels and Apostles." [f]

VII. From many writers also of the third century, and especially from Cyprian, who lived in the middle of it, it is collected, that the Christian scriptures were divided into two codes or volumes, one called the "gospels or scriptures of the Lord," the other, the "Apostles or epistles of the Apostles." [g]

VIII. Eusebius, as we have already seen, takes some pains to show, that the gospel of St. John had been justly placed by the ancients "the fourth in order, and after the other three." [h] These are the terms of his proposition; and the very introduction of such an argument proves inconteſtibly, that the four gospels had been collected into a volume to the exclusion of every

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 383.
[b] Ib. p. 331.
[c] Ib. vol. II. p. 516.
[d] Ib. p. 631.
[e] Ib. vol. II. p. 574.
[f] Ib. p. 632.
[g] Ib. vol. IV. p. 846.
[h] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 90.

other; that their order in the volume had been adjusted with much consideration; and that this had been done by those who were called ancients in the time of Eusebius.

In the Diocletian persecution in the year 303, the scriptures were sought out and burnt;[a] many suffered death rather than deliver them up; and those who betrayed them to the persecutors were accounted as lapsed and apostate. On the other hand, Constantine, after his conversion, gave directions for multiplying copies of the divine oracles, and for magnificently adorning them at the expense of the imperial treasury,[b] what the Christians of that age so richly embellished in their prosperity, and, which is more, so tenaciously preserved under persecution, was the very volume of the New Testament which we now read.

Sect. IV.

Our present sacred writings were soon distinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect.

I. POLYCARP: "I trust that ye are well exercised in the holy scriptures—as in these scriptures it is said, Be ye angry and sin not, and let not the sun go down upon your wrath."[c] This passage is extremely important; because it proves that, in the time of Polycarp, who had lived with the apostles, there were Christian writings distinguished by the name of "holy scriptures," or sacred writings. Moreover, the text quoted by Polycarp is a text found in the collection at this day. What also the same Polycarp hath elsewhere quoted in the same manner, may be considered as proved to belong to the collection; and this comprehends St. Matthew's, and, probably, St. Luke's gospel, the Acts of the Apostles, ten epistles of Paul, the first epistle of Peter, and the first of John.[d] In another place Polycarp has these words: "Whoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says there is neither resurrection nor judgment, he is the first-born of Satan."[e] It does not appear what else Polycarp could mean by the "oracles of the Lord," but those same "holy scriptures," or sacred writings, of which he had spoken before.

[a] Ib. vol. VII. p. 214. et seq. [b] Ib. p. 432.
[c] Ib. vol. I. p. 203. [d] Ib. p. 223. [e] Ib. p. 222.

II. Juſtin Martyr, whoſe apology was written about thirty years after Polycarp's epiſtle, expreſsly cites ſome of our preſent hiſtories under the title of GOSPEL, and that, not as a name by him firſt aſcribed to them, but as the name by which they were generally known in his time. His words are theſe:—"For the apoſtles in the memoirs compoſed by them, *which are called goſpels*, have thus delivered it, that Jeſus commanded them to take bread, and give thanks."[a] There exiſts no doubt, but that, by the memoirs above-mentioned, Juſtin meant our preſent hiſtorical ſcriptures, for, throughout his works, he quotes theſe, and no others.

III. Dionyſius, biſhop of Corinth, who came thirty years after Juſtin, in a paſſage preſerved in Euſebius, (for his works are loſt) ſpeaks of "the ſcriptures of the Lord."[b]

IV. And at the ſame time, or very nearly ſo, by Irenæus, biſhop of Lyons in France,[c] they are called "divine ſcriptures,"—"divine oracles,"—"ſcriptures of the Lord,"—"evangelic and apoſtolic writings."[d] The quotations of Irenæus prove decidedly, that our preſent goſpels, and theſe alone, together with the Acts of the apoſtles, were the hiſtorical books comprehended by him under theſe appellations.

V. St. Matthew's goſpel is quoted by Theophilus, biſhop of Antioch, contemporary with Irenæus, under the title of the "evangelic voice;"[e] and the copious works of Clement of Alexandria, publiſhed within fifteen years of the ſame time, aſcribe to the books of the New Teſtament the various titles of "ſacred books,"—"divine ſcriptures,"—"divinely inſpired ſcriptures,"—"ſcriptures of the Lord,"—"the true evangelical canon."[f]

VI. Tertullian, who joins on with Clement, beſide adopting moſt of the names and epithets above noticed, calls the goſpels "our digeſta," in alluſion, as it ſhould ſeem, to ſome collection of Roman laws[g] then extant.

VII. By Origen, who came thirty years after Tertullian, the ſame, and others no leſs ſtrong titles, are applied to the Chriſtian ſcriptures; and, in addition thereunto, this writer frequently ſpeaks of the "Old and New Teſtament,"—"the ancient and new ſcriptures,"—"the ancient and new oracles."[h]

[a] Ib. p. 271. [b] Ib. p. 298.

[c] The reader will obſerve the remoteneſs of theſe two writers in country and ſituation.

[d] Ib. p. 343, et ſeq. [e] Ib. p. 427.

[f] Ib. vol. II. p. 515. [g] Ib. p. 630. [h] Ib. vol. III. p. 280.

VIII. In Cyprian, who was not twenty years later, they are "books of the spirit,"—"divine fountains,"—"fountains of the divine fulness."[a]

The expressions we have thus quoted are evidences of high and peculiar respect. They all occur within two centuries from the publication of the books. Some of them commence with the companions of the apostles; and they increase in number and variety, through a series of writers, touching upon one another, and deduced from the first age of the religion.

Sect. V.

Our scriptures were publickly read and expounded in the religious assemblies of the early Christians.

I. JUSTIN MARTYR, who wrote in the year 140, which was seventy or eighty years after some, and less, probably, after others of the gospels were published, giving in his first apology, an account to the emperor of the Christian worship, has this remarkable passage:

"The memoirs of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, are read according as the time allows, and when the reader has ended, the president makes a discourse, exhorting to the imitation of so excellent things."[b]

A few short observations will show the value of this testimony.

1. The "memoirs of the apostles," Justin in another place expressly tells us are what are called "gospels;" and that they were the gospels, which we now use, is made certain by Justin's numerous quotations of *them*, and his silence about any others.

2. Justin describes the general usage of the Christian church.

3. Justin does not speak of it as recent or newly instituted, but in the terms in which men speak of established customs.

II. Tertullian, who followed Justin at the distance of about fifty years, in his account of the religious assemblies of Christians as they were conducted in his time, says, "We come together to recollect the divine scriptures; we nourish our faith, raise our hope, confirm our trust, by the sacred word."[c]

III. Eusebius records of Origen, and cites for his authority the letters of bishops contemporary with Origen, that, when he

[a] Ib. vol. IV. p. 844. [b] Ib. vol. I. p. 273. [c] Ib. vol. II. p. 628.

went into Paleſtine about the year 216, which was only 16 years after the date of Tertullian's teſtimony, he was deſired by the biſhops of that country to diſcourſe and expound the ſcriptures publickly in the church, though he was not yet ordained a preſbyter.[a] This anecdote recognizes the uſage, not only of reading, but of expounding, the ſcriptures; and both as ſubſiſting in full force. Origen alſo himſelf bears witneſs to the ſame practice: "This (ſays he) we do, when the ſcriptures are read in the church, and when the diſcourſe for explication is delivered to the people."[b] And, what is a ſtill more ample teſtimony, many homilies of his upon the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament delivered by him in the aſſemblies of the church, are ſtill extant.

IV. Cyprian, whoſe age was not twenty years lower than that of Origen, gives his people an account of having ordained two perſons, who were before confeſſors, to be readers, and what they were to read, appears by the reaſon which he gives for his choice:—"Nothing (ſays Cyprian) can be more fit, than that he, who has made a glorious confeſſion of the Lord, ſhould read publickly in the church; that he who has ſhown himſelf willing to die a martyr, ſhould read the goſpel of Chriſt, by which martyrs are made."[c]

V. Intimations of the ſame cuſtom may be traced in a great number of writers in the beginning and throughout the whole of the fourth century. Of theſe teſtimonies I will only uſe one as being, of itſelf, expreſs and full. Auguſtine, who appeared near the concluſion of the century, diſplays the benefit of the Chriſtian religion on this very account, the public reading of the ſcriptures in the churches, "where (ſays he) is a confluence of all ſorts of people of both ſexes, and where they hear how they ought to live well in this world, that they may deſerve to live happily and eternally in another." And this cuſtom he declares to be univerſal: "The canonical books of ſcripture being read every where, the miracles therein recorded are well known to all people."[d]

It does not appear that any books, other than our preſent ſcriptures, were thus publickly read, except that the epiſtle of Clement was read in the church of Corinth, to which it was addreſſed, and in ſome others; and that the Shepherd of Hermas was read in many churches.

[a] Ib. vol. III. p. 68. [b] Ib. p. 302.
[c] Ib. vol. IV. p. 842. [d] Ib. vol. X. p. 276, et. ſeq.

Nor does it ſubtract much from the value of the argument, that theſe two writings partly come within it, becauſe we allow them to be the genuine writings of apoſtolical men. There is not the leaſt evidence, that any other goſpel, than the four which we receive, was ever admitted to this diſtinction.

SECT. VI.

Commentaries were anciently written upon the ſcriptures; harmonies formed out of them; different copies carefully collated; and verſions made of them into different languages.

NO greater proof can be given of the eſteem in which theſe books were holden by the ancient Chriſtians, or of the ſenſe then entertained of their value and importance, than the induſtry beſtowed upon them. And it ought to be obſerved, that the value and importance of theſe books conſiſted entirely in their genuineneſs and truth. There was nothing in them as works of taſte, or as compoſitions, which could have induced any one to have written a note upon them. Moreover it ſhows that they were even *then* conſidered as ancient books. Men do not write comments upon publications of their own times: therefore the teſtimonies cited under this head afford an evidence which carries up the evangelic writings much beyond the age of the teſtimonies themſelves, and to that of their reputed authors.

I. Tatian, a follower of Juſtin Martyr, and who flouriſhed about the year 170, compoſed a harmony, or collation of the goſpels, which he called *Diateſſaron* of the four.[a] The title, as well as the work, is remarkable; becauſe it ſhows that then, as now, there were four, and only four goſpels, in general uſe with Chriſtians. And this was little more than a hundred years after the publication of ſome of them.

II. Pantænus, of the Alexandrian ſchool, a man of great reputation and learning, who came twenty years after Tatian, wrote many commentaries upon the holy ſcriptures, which, as Jerome teſtifies, were extant in his time.

III. Clement of Alexandria wrote ſhort explications of many books of the Old and New Teſtament.[c]

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 307. [b] Ib. vol. I. p. 455.
[c] Ib. vol. II. p. 462.

IV. Tertullian appeals from the authority of a later version then in use to the "authentic Greek."[a]

V. An anonymous author, quoted by Eusebius, and who appears to have written about the year 212, appeals to the *ancient copies* of the scriptures, in refutation of some corrupt readings alleged by the followers of Artemon.[b]

VI. The same Eusebius, mentioning by name several writers of the church who lived at this time, and concerning whom he says, "there still remain divers monuments of the laudable industry of those ancient and ecclesiastical men," (i. e. of Christian writers, who were considered as ancient in the year 300) adds, "there are besides treatises of many others, whose names we have not been able to learn, orthodox and ecclesiastical men, as the interpretations of the divine scriptures, given by each of them, show."[c]

VII. The five last testimonies may be referred to the year 200, immediately after which, a period of thirty years gives us,

Julius Africanus, who wrote an epistle upon the apparent difference in the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, which he endeavours to reconcile by the distinction of natural and legal descent, and conducts his hypothesis with great industry through the whole series of generations;[d]

Ammonius, a learned Alexandrian, who composed, as Tatian had done, a harmony of *the four gospels*; which proves, as Tatian's work did, that there were four gospels, and no more, at this time in use in the church. It affords also an instance of the zeal of Christians for those writings, and of their solicitude about them;[e]

And, above both these, Origen, who wrote commentaries, or homilies, upon most of the books included in the New Testament, and upon no other books but these. In particular, he wrote upon St. John's gospel, very largely upon St. Matthew's, and commentaries, or homilies, upon the Acts of the apostles.[f]

VIII. In addition to these, the third century likewise contains,

Dionysius of Alexandria, a very learned man, who compared, with great accuracy, the accounts in the four gospels of the time of Christ's resurrection, adding a reflection which shewed his opinion of their authority:—"Let us not think that the evan-

[a] Ib. p. 638. [b] Ib. vol. III. p. 46.
[c] Ib. vol. II. p. 551. [d] Ib, vol. III. p. 170.
[e] Ib. p. 122. [f] Ib. p. 352, 192, 202, 245.

geliſts diſagree, or contradict each other, although there be ſome ſmall difference ; but let us honeſtly and faithfully endeavour to reconcile what we read."[a]

Victorin, biſhop of Pettaw in Germany, who wrote comments upon St. Matthew's goſpel ;[b]

Lucian, a preſbyter of Antioch, and Heſychius, an Egyptian biſhop, who put forth editions of the New Teſtament.

IX. The fourth century ſupplies a catalogue[c] of fourteen writers who expended their labours upon the books of the New Teſtament, and whoſe works or names are come down to our times ; amongſt which number, it may be ſufficient, for the purpoſe of ſhowing the ſentiments and the ſtudies of learned Chriſtians of that age, to notice the following :

Euſebius, in the very beginning of the century, wrote expreſsly upon the diſcrepancies obſervable in the goſpels, and likewiſe a treatiſe, in which he pointed out what things are related by four, what by three, what by two and what by one evangeliſt.[d] This author alſo teſtifies, what is certainly a material piece of evidence, "that the writings of the apoſtles had obtained ſuch an eſteem, as to be tranſlated into every language both of Greeks and Barbarians, and to be diligently ſtudied by all nations."[e] This teſtimony was given about the year 300 ; how long *before* that date theſe tranſlations were made, does not appear.

Damaſus, biſhop of Rome, correſponded with St. Jerome upon the expoſition of difficult texts of ſcripture ; and, in a letter ſtill remaining, deſires Jerome to give him a clear explanation of the word Hoſanna, found in the New Teſtament ; "he (Damaſus) having met with very different interpretations of it in the Greek and Latin commentaries of Catholic writers which he had read."[f] This laſt clauſe ſhows the number and variety of commentaries then extant.

[a] Ib. vol. IV. p 661. [b] Ib. p. 195.

[c]

Euſebius, A. D.	315	Didymus of Alex.	370
Juvencus, Spain,	330	Ambroſe of Milan,	374
Theodore, Thrace,	334	Diodore of Tarſus,	378
Hilary, Poicters,	354	Gaudentius of Breſcia,	387
Fortunatus,	340	Theodore of Cilicia,	394
Apollinarius of Laodicea,	362	Jerome,	392
Damaſus, Rome,	366	Chryſoſtom.	398
Gregory, Nyſſen,	371		

[d] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 46. [e] Ib. p. 201. [f] Ib. vol. IX. p. 108.

Gregory of Nyſſen, at one time, appeals to the moſt exact copies of St. Mark's goſpel; at another time, compares together, and propoſes to reconcile, the ſeveral accounts of the reſurrection *given by the four evangeliſts*; which limitation proves, that there were no other hiſtories of Chriſt deemed authentic beſide theſe, or included in the ſame character with theſe. This writer obſerves, acutely enough, that the diſpoſition of the clothes in the ſepulchre, the napkin that was about our Saviour's head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itſelf, did not beſpeak the terror and hurry of thieves, and therefore refutes the ſtory of the body being ſtolen.[a]

Ambroſe, biſhop of Milan, remarked various readings in the Latin copies of the New Teſtament, and appeals to the original Greek;

And Jerome, towards the concluſion of this century, put forth an edition of the New Teſtament in Latin, corrected, at leaſt as to the goſpels, by Greek copies, "and thoſe (he ſays) ancient."

Laſtly, Chryſoſtom, it is well known, delivered and publiſhed a great many homilies, or ſermons, upon the goſpels and the Acts of the apoſtles.

It is needleſs to bring down this article lower; but it is of importance to add, that there is no example of Chriſtian writers of the three firſt centuries compoſing comments upon any other books than thoſe which are found in the New Teſtament, except the ſingle one, of Clement of Alexandria commenting upon a book called the Revelation of Peter.

Of the *ancient verſions* of the New Teſtament one of the moſt valuable is the Syriac. Syriac was the language of Paleſtine when Chriſtianity was there firſt eſtabliſhed. And although the books of ſcripture were written in Greek, for the purpoſe of a more extended circulation than within the precincts of Judea, yet it is probable that they would ſoon be tranſlated into the vulgar language of the country where the religion firſt prevailed. Accordingly a Syriac tranſlation is now extant, all along, ſo far as appears, uſed by the inhabitants of Syria, bearing many internal marks of high antiquity, ſupported in its pretenſions by the uniform tradition of the Eaſt, and confirmed by the diſcovery of many very ancient manuſcripts in the libraries of Europe. It is about 200 years ſince a biſhop of Antioch ſent a copy of this tranſlation into Europe to be printed; and this

[a] Ib. p. 163.

ſeems to be the firſt time that the tranſlation became generally known to theſe parts of the world. The biſhop of Antioch's teſtament was found to contain all our books, except the ſecond epiſtle of Peter, the ſecond and third of John, and the Revelation; which books however, have ſince been diſcovered in that language in ſome ancient manuſcripts of Europe. But in this collection, no other book, beſide what is in ours, appears ever to have had a place. And, which is very worthy of obſervation, the text, though preſerved in a remote country, and without communication with ours, differs from ours very little, and in nothing that is important.[a]

SECT. VII.

Our ſcriptures were received by ancient Chriſtians of different ſects and perſuaſions, by many heretics as well as Catholics, and were uſually appealed to by both ſides in the controverſies which aroſe in thoſe days.

THE three moſt ancient topics of controverſy amongſt Chriſtians were the authority of the Jewiſh inſtitution, the origin of evil, and the nature of Chriſt. Upon the firſt of theſe, we find in very early times, one claſs of heretics rejecting the old Teſtament entirely, another contending for the obligation of its law, in all its parts, throughout its whole extent, and over every one who ſought acceptance with God. Upon the two latter ſubjects a natural, perhaps, and venial, but a fruitleſs, eager and impatient curioſity, prompted by the philoſophy and by the ſcholaſtic habits of the age, which carried men much into bold hypotheſes and conjectural ſolutions, raiſed amongſt ſome who profeſſed Chriſtianity very wild and unfounded opinions. I think there is no reaſon to believe, that the number of theſe bore any conſiderable proportion to the body of the Chriſtian church; and amidſt the diſputes, which ſuch opinions neceſſarily occaſioned, it is a great ſatisfaction to perceive, what in a vaſt plurality of inſtances we do perceive, all ſides recurring to the ſame ſcriptures.

I.[b] Baſilides lived near the age of the apoſtles, about the

[a] Jones on the canon, vol. I. c. 14.

[b] The materials of the former part of this ſection are taken from Dr. Lardner's hiſtory of the heretics of the two firſt centuries publiſh-

year 120, or perhaps ſooner.[a] He rejected the Jewiſh inſtitution, not as ſpurious, but as proceeding from a being inferior to the true God; and in other reſpects, advanced a ſcheme of theology widely different from the general doctrine of the Chriſtian church, and which, as it gained over ſome diſciples, was warmly oppoſed by Chriſtian writers of the ſecond and third century. In theſe writings there is poſitive evidence, that Baſilides received the goſpel of Matthew; and there is no ſufficient proof that he rejected any of the other three; on the contrary, it appears that he wrote a commentary upon the goſpel, ſo copious, as to be divided into twenty-four books.

II. The Valentinians appeared about the ſame time.[b] Their hereſy conſiſted in certain notions concerning angelic natures, which can hardly be rendered intelligible to a modern reader. They ſeem, however, to have acquired as much importance as any of the ſeparatiſts of that early age. Of this ſect, Irenæus, who wrote A. D. 172, expreſsly records, that they endeavoured to fetch arguments for their opinions, from the evangelic and apoſtolic writings.[c] Heracleon, one of the moſt celebrated of the ſect, and who lived probably ſo early as the year 125, wrote commentaries upon Luke and John.[d] Some obſervations alſo of his upon Matthew are preſerved by Origen.[e] Nor is there any reaſon to doubt, that he received the whole New Teſtament.

III. The Carpocratians were alſo an early hereſy, little, if at all, later than the two preceding.[f] Some of their opinions reſembled, what we at this day mean by Socinianiſm. With reſpect to the ſcriptures, they are ſpecifically charged by Irenæus and by Epiphanius, with endeavouring to pervert a paſſage in Matthew, which amounts to a poſitive proof, that they received that goſpel.[g] Negatively, they are not accuſed by their adverſaries, of rejecting any part of the New Teſtament.

IV. The Sethians, A. D. 150;[h] the Montaniſts, A. D. 156;[i] the Marcoſians, A. D. 160;[k] Hermogenes, A. D. 180;[l] Praxias, A. D. 196;[m] Artemon, A. D. 200;[n] Theodotus, A. D. 200; all included under the denomination of

ed ſince his death, with additions by the Rev. Mr. Hogg of Exeter, and inſerted into the ninth volume of his works, of the edition of 1788.

[a] Vol. IX ed. 1788. p. 271. [b] Ib. p. 350, 351. [c] Vol. I. p. 383.
[d] Vol. IX. ed. 1788. p. 352. [e] Ib. 353. [f] Ib. 309. [g] Ib. 318.
[h] Vol. IX. ed. 1788, p. 455. [i] Ib. p. 482. [k] Ib. p. 348.
[l] Ib. p. 473. [m] Ib. p. 433. [n] Ib. p. 466.

heretics, and all engaged in controverſies with Catholic Chriſtians, received the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament.

V. Tatian, who lived in the year 172, went into many extravagant opinions, was the founder of a ſect called Encratites, and was deeply involved in diſputes with the Chriſtians of that age; yet Tatian ſo received the four goſpels, as tō compoſe a harmony from them.

VI. From a writer, quoted by Euſebius, of about the year 200, it is apparent that they, who, at that time, contended for the mere humanity of Chriſt, argued from the ſcriptures; for they are accuſed by this writer, of making alterations in their copies, in order to favour their opinions.[a]

VII. Origen's ſentiments excited great controverſies; the biſhops of Rome and Alexandria, and many others, condemning, the biſhops of the Eaſt eſpouſing them; yet there is not the ſmalleſt queſtion, but that both the advocates and adverſaries of theſe opinions acknowledged the ſame authority of ſcripture. In his time, which the reader will remember was about one hundred and fifty years after the ſcriptures were publiſhed, many diſſenſions ſubſiſted amongſt Chriſtians, with which they were reproached by Celſus, yet Origen, who has recorded this accuſation without contradicting it, nevertheleſs teſtifies "that that the four goſpels were received without diſpute by the whole church of God under heaven."[b]

VIII. Paul of Samoſata, about thirty years after Origen, ſo diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the controverſy concerning the nature of Chriſt, as to be the ſubject of two councils or ſynods, aſſembled at Antioch, upon his opinions. Yet he is not charged by his adverſaries with rejecting any book of the New Teſtament. On the contrary, Epiphanius, who wrote a hiſtory of heretics a hundred years afterwards, ſays that Paul endeavoured to ſupport his doctrine by texts of ſcripture. And Vicentius Lirinenſis, A. D. 434, ſpeaking of Paul and other heretics of the ſame age, has theſe words: "Here, perhaps, ſome one may aſk, whether heretics alſo urge the teſtimony of ſcripture. They urge it indeed, explicitly and vehemently; for you may ſee them flying through every book of the ſacred law."[c]

IX. A controverſy at the ſame time exiſted with the Noetians or Sabellians, who ſeem to have gone into the oppoſite extreme from that of Paul of Samoſata, and his followers. Yet,

[a] Ib. Vol. III. p. 46.
[b] Ib. vol. IV. p. 642. [c] Ib. Vol. XI. p. 158.

according to the expreſs teſtimony of Epiphanius, Sabellius received all the ſcriptures. And with both ſects Catholic writers conſtantly allege the ſcriptures, and reply to the arguments which their opponents drew from particular texts. This is a proof, that parties, who were the moſt oppoſite and irreconcileable to one another, acknowledged the authority of ſcripture, and with equal deference.

X. And as a general teſtimony to the ſame point, may be produced what was ſaid by one of the biſhops of the council of Carthage, which was holden a little before this time. "I am of opinion that blaſphemous and wicked heretics, who *pervert* the ſacred and adorable words of the ſcriptures, ſhould be execrated."[a] Undoubtedly what they perverted they received.

XI. The Millennium, Novatianiſm, the baptiſm of heretics, the keeping of Eaſter, engaged alſo the attention, and divided the opinions of Chriſtians, at and before that time, (and, by the way, it may be obſerved, that ſuch diſputes, though on ſome accounts to be blamed, ſhowed how much men were in earneſt upon the ſubject) yet every one appealed for the grounds of his opinion to ſcripture authority. Dionyſius of Alexandria, who flouriſhed A. D. 247, deſcribing a conference, or public diſputation, with the Millenarians of Egypt, confeſſes of them, though their adverſary, "that they embraced whatever could be made out by good arguments from the holy ſcriptures."[b] Novatus, A. D. 251, diſtinguiſhed by ſome rigid ſentiments concerning the reception of thoſe who had lapſed, and the founder of a numerous ſect, in his few remaining works quotes the goſpel with the ſame reſpect as other Chriſtians did; and concerning his followers the teſtimony of Socrates, who wrote about the year 440, is poſitive, viz. "that, in the diſputes between the Catholics and them, each ſide endeavoured to ſupport itſelf by the authority of the divine ſcriptures."[c]

XII. The Donatiſts, who ſprung up in the year 328, uſed the ſame ſcriptures as we do. "Produce (ſaith Auguſtine) ſome proof from the ſcriptures, whoſe authority is common to us both."[d]

XIII. It is perfectly notorious, that, in the Arian controverſy, which aroſe ſoon after the year 300, both ſides appealed to the ſame ſcriptures, and with equal profeſſions of deference and regard. The Arians, in their council of Antioch, A. D. 341, pro-

[a] Ib. p. 839. [b] Ib. vol. IV. p. 666. [c] Ib. vol. V. p. 105. [d] Ib. vol. VII. p. 243.

nounce that, "if any one, contrary to the ſound doctrine of the ſcriptures, ſay that the Son is a creature, as one of the creatures, let him be anathema."[a] They and the Athanaſians mutually accuſe each other of uſing *unſcriptural* phraſes, which was a mutual acknowledgment of the concluſive authority of ſcripture.

XIV. The Priſcillianiſts, A. D. 378,[b] the Pelagians, A. D. 405,[c] received the ſame ſcriptures as we do.

XV. The teſtimony of Chryſoſtom, who lived near the year 400, is ſo poſitive in affirmation of the propoſition which we maintain, that it may form a proper concluſion of the argument. "The general reception of the goſpels is a proof that their hiſtory is true and conſiſtent; for ſince the writing of the goſpels, many hereſies have ariſen, holding opinions contrary to what is contained in them, who yet receive the goſpels either entire or in part."[d] I am not moved by what may ſeem a deduction from Chryſoſtom's teſtimony, the words "entire or in part;" for, if all the parts, which were ever queſtioned in our goſpels, were given up, it would not affect the miraculous origin of the religion in the ſmalleſt degree: *e. g.*

Cerinthus is ſaid by Epiphanius to have received the goſpel of Matthew, but not entire. What the omiſſions were does not appear. The common opinion, that he rejected the two firſt chapters ſeems to have been a miſtake.[e] It is agreed, however, by all who have given any account of Cerinthus, that he taught that the Holy Ghoſt (whether he meant by that name a perſon or a power) deſcended upon Jeſus at his baptiſm; that Jeſus from this time performed many miracles, and that he appeared after his death. He muſt have retained therefore the eſſential parts of the hiſtory.

Of all the ancient heretics, the moſt extraordinary was Marcion.[f] One of his tenets was the rejection of the Old Teſtament, as proceeding from an inferior and imperfect deity; and in purſuance of this hypotheſis, he eraſed from the New, and that as it ſhould ſeem, without entering into any critical reaſons, every paſſage which recognized the Jewiſh ſcriptures. He ſpared not a text which contradicted his opinion. It is reaſonable to believe that Marcion treated books as he treated texts: yet this raſh and wild controverſialiſt publiſhed a recenſion, or chaſtiſed edi-

[a] Ib. p. 277. [b] Ib. vol. IX. p. 325. [c] Ib. vol. XI. p. 52.
[d] Ib. vol. X. p. 316. [e] Ib. vol. IX. ed. 1788, p. 322.
[f] Ib. ſect. ii. c. x. Alſo, Michael. vol. I. c. 1. ſect. xviii.

tion, of St. Luke's goſpel, containing the leading facts, and all which is neceſſary to authenticate the religion. This example affords proof, that there were always ſome points, and thoſe the main points, which neither wildneſs nor raſhneſs, neither the fury of oppoſition nor the intemperance of controverſy, would venture to call in queſtion. There is no reaſon to believe that Marcion, though full of reſentment againſt the Catholic Chriſtians, ever charged them with forging their books. "The Goſpel of St. Matthew, the epiſtle to the Hebrews, with thoſe of St. Peter and St. James, as well as the Old Teſtament in general, (he ſaid) were writings not for Chriſtians but for Jews."[a] This declaration ſhows the ground upon which Marcion proceeded in his mutilation of the ſcriptures, viz. his diſlike of the paſſages or the books. Marcion flouriſhed about the year 130.

Dr. Lardner, in his General Review, ſums up this head of evidence in the following words; "Noetus, Paul of Samoſata, Sabellius, Marcellus, Photinus, the Novatians, Donatiſts, Manicheans,[b] Priſcillianiſts, beſide Artemon, the Audians, the Arians, and divers others, all received moſt or all of the ſame books of the New Teſtament which the Catholics received; and agreed in a like reſpect for them as writ by the apoſtles, or their diſciples and companions."[c]

Sect. VIII.

The four Goſpels, the Acts of the Apoſtles, thirteen Epiſtles of St. Paul, the firſt Epiſtle of John, and the firſt of Peter, were received without doubt by thoſe who doubted concerning the other books, which are included in our preſent canon.

I STATE this propoſition, becauſe, if made out, it ſhows that the authenticity of their books was a ſubject amongſt the early Chriſtians of conſideration and inquiry; and that, where there was cauſe of doubt, they did doubt; a circumſtance which ſtrengthens very much their teſtimony to ſuch books as were received by them with full acquieſcence.

[a] I have tranſcribed this ſentence from Michaelis, (page 38) who has not, however, referred to the authority upon which he attributes theſe words to Marcion.

[b] This muſt be with an exception, however, of Fauſtus, who lived ſo late as the year 384.

[c] Ib. vol. XII. p. 12.—Dr. Lardner's future inquiries ſupplied him with many other inſtances.

I. Jerome, in his account of Caius, who was probably a presbyter of Rome, and who flourished near the year 200, records of him, that, reckoning up only thirteen epistles of Paul, he says the fourteenth, which is inscribed to the Hebrews, is not his; and then Jerome adds, "With the Romans to this day it is not looked upon as Paul's." This agrees, in the main, with the account given by Eusebius of the same ancient author and his work; except that Eusebius delivers his own remark in more guarded terms, "and indeed to this very time, by some of the Romans, this epistle is not thought to be the apostle's."[a]

II. Origen, about twenty years after Caius, quoting the epistle to the Hebrews, observes that some might dispute the authority of that epistle, and therefore proceeds to quote to the same point, as *undoubted* books of scripture, the gospel of St. Matthew, the Acts of the apostles, and Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians.[b] And in another place this author speaks of the epistle to the Hebrews thus: "The account come down to us is various, some saying that Clement, who was bishop of Rome, wrote this epistle; others, that it was Luke, the same who writ the gospel and the Acts." Speaking also in the same paragraph of Peter, "Peter (says he) has left one epistle acknowledged; let it be granted likewise that he wrote a second, for it is doubted of." And of John, "He has also left one epistle, of a very few lines; grant also a second and a third, for all do not allow these to be genuine." Now let it be noted, that Origen, who thus discriminates, and thus confesses his own doubts, and the doubts which subsisted in his time, expressly witnesses concerning the four gospels, "that they alone are received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven."[c]

III. Dionysius of Alexandria, in the year 247, doubts concerning the book of Revelation, whether it was written by St. John; states the grounds of his doubt; represents the diversity of opinion concerning it, in his own time, and before his time.[d] Yet the same Dionysius uses and collates the four gospels, in a manner which shows that he entertained not the smallest suspicion of *their* authority, and in a manner also which shows that they, and they alone, were received as authentic histories of Christ.[e]

IV. But this section may be said to have been framed on purpose to introduce to the reader two remarkable passages, ex-

[a] Ib. vol. III. p. 240. [b] Ib. p. 246. [c] Ib. p. 234.
[d] Ib. vol. IV. p. 670. [e] Ib. p. 661.

tant in Eusebius's ecclesiastical history. The first passage opens with these words—"Let us observe the writings of the apostle John, which are *uncontradicted*; and, first of all, must be mentioned, as acknowledged of all, the gospel according to him, well known to all the churches under heaven." The author then proceeds to relate the occasions of writing the gospels, and the reasons for placing St. John's the last, manifestly speaking throughout of all the four as parallel in their authority, and in the certainty of their original.[a] The second passage is taken from a chapter, the title of which is, "Of the Scriptures *universally acknowledged*, and of those that are not such." Eusebius begins his enumeration in the following manner:—"In the first place, are to be ranked the sacred four gospels; then the book of the Acts of the apostles; after that are to be reckoned the epistles of Paul; in the next place, that called the first epistle of John, and the epistle of Peter, are to be esteemed authentic; after this is to be placed, if it be thought fit, the Revelation of John, about which we shall observe the different opinions at proper seasons. Of the controverted, but yet well known, or approved by the most, are that called the epistle of James, and that of Jude, and the second of Peter, and the second and third of John, whether they are written by the evangelist, or another of the same name."[b] He then proceeds to reckon up five others, not in our canon, which he calls in one place *spurious*, in another *controverted*, meaning, as appears to me, nearly the same thing by these two words.[c]

It is manifest from this passage, that the four gospels, and the Acts of the apostles, (the parts of scripture with which our concern principally lies) were acknowledged without dispute even by those who raised objections, or entertained doubts, about some other parts of the same collection. But the passage proves something more than this. The author was extremely conversant in the writings of Christians, which had been published from the commencement of the institution to his own

[a] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 90. [b] Ib. p. 98.

[c] That Eusebius could not intend, by the word rendered "spurious," what we at present mean by it, is evident from a clause in this very chapter, where, speaking of the gospels of Peter and Thomas, and Matthias and some others, he says, "They are not so much as to be reckoned among the *spurious*, but are to be rejected, as altogether absurd and impious." Vol. VIII. p. 98.

time; and it was from these writings that he drew his knowledge of the character and reception of the books in question. That Eusebius recurred to this medium of information, and that he had examined with attention this species of proof, is shewn, first, by a passage in the very chapter we are quoting, in which, speaking of the books which he calls spurious, "None (he says) of the ecclesiastical writers, in the succession of the apostles, have vouchsafed to make any mention of them in their writings;" and secondly, by another passage of the same work, wherein, speaking of the first epistle of Peter, "This (he says) the presbyters of ancient times have quoted in their writings as undoubtedly genuine;"[a] and then, speaking of some other writings bearing the name of Peter, "We know (he says) that they have not been delivered down to us in the number of Catholic writings, forasmuch as no ecclesiastical writer of the ancients, or of our times, has made use of testimonies out of them." "But in the progress of this history," the author proceeds, "we shall make it our business to shew, together with the successions from the apostles, what ecclesiastical writers, in every age, have used such writings as these which are contradicted, and what they have said, with regard to the scriptures received in the New Testament, *and acknowledged by all*, and with regard to those which are not such."[b]

After this it is reasonable to believe, that, when Eusebius states the four gospels, and the Acts of the apostles, as uncontradicted, uncontested, and acknowledged by all; and when he places them in opposition, not only to those which were spurious in our sense of that term, but to those which were controverted, and even to those which were well known and approved by many, yet doubted of by some; he represents, not only the sense of his own age, but the result of the evidence, which the writings of prior ages, from the apostle's time to his own, had furnished to his inquiries. The opinion of Eusebius and his contemporaries, appears to have been founded upon the testimony of writers, whom they *then* called ancient; and we may observe, that such of the works of these writers, as have come down to our times, entirely confirm the judgment, and support the distinction which Eusebius proposes. The books which he calls "books universally acknowledged," are in fact used and quoted, in the remaining works of Christian writers, during the 250 years between the apostle's time and that of Eusebius,

[a] Ib. p. 99. [b] Ib. p. 111.

much more frequently than, and in a different manner from thoſe, the authority of which, he tells us, was diſputed.

Sect. IX.

Our hiſtorical ſcriptures were attacked by the early adverſaries of Chriſtianity, as containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

I. NEAR the middle of the ſecond century, Celſus, a heathen philoſopher, wrote a profeſſed treatiſe againſt Chriſtianity. To this treatiſe, Origen, who came about fifty years after him, publiſhed an anſwer, in which he frequently recites his adverſary's words and arguments. The work of Celſus is loſt; but that of Origen remains. Origen appears to have given us the words of Celſus, where he profeſſes to give them, very faithfully; and, amongſt other reaſons for thinking ſo, this is one, that the objection, as ſtated by him from Celſus, is ſometimes ſtronger than his own anſwer. I think it alſo probable that Origen, in his anſwer, has retailed a large portion of the work of Celſus: "That it may not be ſuſpected (he ſays) that we paſs by any chapters, becauſe we have no anſwers at hand, I have thought it beſt, according to my ability, to confute every thing propoſed by him, not ſo much obſerving the natural order of things, as the order which he has taken himſelf."[a]

Celſus wrote about 100 years after the goſpels were publiſhed; and therefore any notice of theſe books from him are extremely important from their antiquity. They are, however, rendered more ſo by the character of the author; for the reception, credit, and notoriety of theſe books muſt have been well eſtabliſhed amongſt Chriſtians, to have made them ſubjects of animadverſion and oppoſition by ſtrangers and by enemies. It evinces the truth of what Chryſoſtom, two centuries afterwards, obſerved, that "the goſpels, when written, were not hid in a corner, or buried in obſcurity, but they were made known to all the world, before enemies as well as others, even as they are now."

1. Celſus, or the Jew whom he perſonates, uſes theſe words:

[a] Or. cont. Celſ. l. i. ſect. 41.

"I could say many things concerning the affairs of Jesus, and those, too, different from those written by the disciples of Jesus, but I purposely omit them."[a] Upon this passage it has been rightly observed, that it is not easy to believe, that if Celsus could have contradicted the disciples upon good evidence in any material point, he would have omitted to do so; and that the assertion is, what Origen calls it, a mere oratorical flourish.

It is sufficient however to prove, that in the time of Celsus, there were books well known, and allowed to be written by the disciples of Jesus, which books contained a history of him. By the term *disciples*, Celsus does not mean the followers of Jesus in general, for them he calls Christians, or believers, or the like, but those who had been taught by Jesus himself, i. e. his apostles and companions.

2. In another passage, Celsus accuses the Christians of altering the gospel.[b] The accusation refers to some varieties in the readings of particular passages; for Celsus goes on to object, that when they are pressed hard, and one reading has been confuted they disown that, and fly to another. We cannot perceive from Origen that Celsus specified any particular instances, and without such specification the charge is of no value. But the true conclusion to be drawn from it is, that there were in the hands of the Christians, histories, which were even then of some standing; for various readings and corruptions do not take place in recent productions.

The former quotation, the reader will remember, proved that these books were composed by the disciples of Jesus, strictly so called: the present quotation shews, that though objections were taken by the adversaries of the religion to the integrity of these books, there was none to their genuineness.

3. In a third passage, the Jew, whom Celsus introduces, shuts up an argument in this manner:—"These things then we have alleged to you out *of your own writings*, not needing any other weapons."[c] It is manifest that this boast proceeds upon the supposition that the books, over which the writer affects to triumph, possessed an authority, by which Christians confessed themselves to be bound.

4. That the books to which Celsus refers were no other than our present gospels, is made out by his allusions to various

[a] Lardner's Jewish and Heathen Testim. vol. II. p. 274.
[b] Ib. p. 275. [c] Ib. p. 276.

paſſages ſtill found in theſe goſpels. Celſus takes notice of the *genealogies*, which fixes two of theſe goſpels; of the precepts, reſiſt not him that injures you, and, if a man ſtrike thee on the one cheek, offer to him the other alſo;[a] of the woes denounced by Chriſt; his predictions; his ſaying that it is impoſſible to ſerve two maſters;[b] of the purple robe, the crown of thorns, and the reed in his hand; of the blood that flowed from the body of Jeſus upon the croſs,[c] which circumſtance is recorded by John alone; and (what is *inſtar omnium* for the purpoſe for which we produce it) of the difference in the accounts given of the reſurrection by the evangeliſts, ſome mentioning two angels at the ſepulchre, others only one.[d]

It is extremely material to remark, that Celſus not only perpetually referred to the accounts of Chriſt contained in the four goſpels,[e] but that he referred to no other accounts; that he founded none of his objections to Chriſtianity upon any thing delivered in ſpurious goſpels.

II. What Celſus was in the ſecond century, Porphyry became in the third. His work, which was a large and formal treatiſe againſt the Chriſtian religion, is not extant. We muſt be content therefore to gather his objections from Chriſtian writers, who have noticed in order to anſwer them; and enough remains of this ſpecies of information, to prove completely, that Porphyry's animadverſions were directed againſt the contents of our preſent goſpels, and of the Acts of the apoſtles; Porphyry conſidering, that to overthrow them was to overthrow the religion. Thus he objects to the repetition of a generation in St. Matthew's genealogy; to Matthew's call; to the quotation of a text from Iſaiah, which is found in a pſalm aſcribed to Aſaph; to the calling of the lake of Tiberias a ſea; to the expreſſion in St. Matthew, "the abomination of deſolation;" to the variation in Matthew and Mark upon the text, "the voice of one crying in the wilderneſs," Matthew citing it from Iſaias, Mark from the prophets; to John's application of the term "word;" to Chriſt's change of intention about going up to the feaſt of tabernacles (John vii. 8.) to the judgment denounced by St. Peter upon Ananias and Sapphira, which he calls an imprecation of death.[f]

[a] Ib. p. 276. [b] Ib. p. 277. [c] Ib. p. 280, 281. [d] Ib. p. 282.

[e] The particulars, of which the above are only a few, are well collected by Mr. Bryant, p. 140.

[f] Jewiſh and Heathen Teſt. vol. III. p. 166, et ſeq.

The inſtances here alleged ſerve, in ſome meaſure, to ſhow the nature of Porphyry's objections, and prove that Pophyry had read the goſpels with that ſort of attention, which a writer would employ, who regarded them as the depoſitaries of the religion which he attacked. Beſide theſe ſpecifications, there exiſts in the writings of ancient Chriſtians general evidence, that the places of ſcripture upon which Porphyry had remarked, were very numerous.

In ſome of the above cited examples, Porphyry, ſpeaking of St. Matthew, calls him your evangeliſt: he alſo uſes the term evangeliſts in the plural number. What was ſaid of Celſus is true likewiſe of Porphyry, that it does not appear that he conſidered any hiſtory of Chriſt, except theſe, as having authority with Chriſtians.

III. A third great writer againſt the Chriſtian religion was the Emperor Julian, whoſe work was compoſed about a century after that of Porphyry.

In various long extracts, tranſcribed from this work by Cyril and Jerome, it appears, [a] that Julian noticed by name Matthew and Luke, in the difference between their genealogies of Chriſt; that he objected to Matthew's application of the prophecy, "Out of Egypt have I called my ſon," (ii. 15.) and to that of "a virgin ſhall conceive;" (i. 22.) that he recited ſayings of Chriſt, and various paſſages of his hiſtory, in the very words of the evangeliſts; in particular, that Jeſus healed lame and blind people, and exorciſed demoniacs, in the villages of Bethſaida and Bethany; that he alleged that none of Chriſt's diſciples aſcribed to him the creation of the world, except John; that neither Paul, nor Matthew, nor Luke, nor Mark, have dared to call Jeſus, God; that John wrote later than the other evangeliſts, and at a time when a great number of men in the cities of Greece and Italy were converted; that he alludes to the converſion of Cornelius and of Sergius Paulus, to Peter's viſion, to the circular letter ſent by the apoſtles and elders at Jeruſalem, which are all recorded in the Acts of the apoſtles: by which quoting of the four goſpels and the Acts of the apoſtles, and by quoting no other, Julian ſhows that theſe were the hiſtorical books, and the only hiſtorical books, received by Chriſtians as of authority, and as the authentic memoirs of Jeſus Chriſt, of his apoſtles, and of the doctrines taught by them.

[a] Ib. vol. IV. p. 77, et ſeq.

But Julian's teſtimony does ſomething more than repreſent the judgment of the Chriſtian church in his time. It diſcovers alſo his own. He himſelf expreſsly ſtates the early date of theſe records. He all along ſuppoſes, and no where attempts to queſtion, their genuineneſs.

The argument in favour of the books of the New Teſtament, drawn from the notice taken of their contents by the early writers againſt the religion, is very conſiderable. It ſhows that the accounts, which Chriſtians had then, were the accounts which we have now; that our preſent ſcriptures were their's. It ſhows, moreover, that neither Celſus in the ſecond, Porphyry in the third, nor Julian in the fourth century, ſuſpected the authenticity of theſe books, or ever inſinuated that Chriſtians were miſtaken in the authors to whom they aſcribed them. Not one of them expreſſed an opinion upon this ſubject different from that which was held by Chriſtians. And when we conſider how much it would have availed them to have caſt a doubt upon this point, if they could; and how ready they ſhowed themſelves to be, to take every advantage in their power; and that they were all men of learning and inquiry; their conceſſion, or rather their ſuffrage, upon the ſubject, is extremely valuable.

In the caſe of Porphyry, it is made ſtill ſtronger, by the conſideration that he did in fact ſupport himſelf by this ſpecies of objection, when he ſaw any room for it, or when his acuteneſs could ſupply any pretence for alleging it. The prophecy of Daniel he attacked upon this very ground of ſpuriouſneſs, inſiſting that it was written after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and maintains his charge of forgery by ſome, far-fetched indeed, but very ſubtle criticiſms. Concerning the writings of the New Teſtament, no trace of this ſuſpicion is any where to be found in him.[a]

SECT. X.

Formal catalogues of authentic ſcriptures were publiſhed, in all which our preſent ſacred hiſtories were included.

THIS ſpecies of evidence comes later than the reſt, as it was not natural that catalogues of any particular claſs of books,

[a] Michaelis's Introduction to the New Teſt. vol. I. p. 43. Marſh's Tranſlation.

should be put forth, until Christian writings became numerous, or until some writings showed themselves, claiming titles which did not belong to them, and thereby rendering it necessary to separate books of authority from others. But, when it does appear, it is extremely satisfactory; the catalogues, though numerous, and made in countries at a wide distance from one another, differing very little, differing in nothing which is material, and all containing the four gospels. To this last article there is no exception.

I. In the writings of Origen which remain, and in some extracts preserved by Eusebius, from works of his which are now lost, there are enumerations of the books of scripture, in which the four gospels and the Acts of the apostles are distinctly and honourably specified, and in which no books appear beside what are now received.[a] The reader, by this time, will easily recollect that the date of Origen's work is A. D. 230.

II. Athanasius, about a century afterwards, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament in form, containing our scriptures and no others; of which he says, "In these alone the doctrine of religion is taught; let no man add to them, or take any thing from them."[b]

III. About 20 years after Athanasius, Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, set forth a catalogue of the books of scripture, publickly read at that time in the church of Jerusalem, exactly the same as our's, except that the "Revelation" is omitted.[c]

IV. And, fifteen years after Cyril, the Council of Laodicea delivered an authoritative catalogue of canonical scripture, like Cyril's, the same as ours, with the omission of the "Revelation."

V. Catalogues now become frequent. Within thirty years from the last date, that is, from the year 363 to near the conclusion of the fourth century, we have catalogues by Epiphanius,[d] by Gregory Nazienzen,[e] by Philaster, bishop of Brescia in Italy,[f] by Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium, all; as they are sometimes called, clean catalogues, (that is, they admit no books into the number beside what we now receive) and all, for every purpose of historic evidence, the same as our's.[g]

[a] Vol. III. p. 234, et seq. vol. VIII. p. 196. [b] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 223.

[c] Ib. p. 270. [d] Ib. p. 368. [e] Vol. IX. p. 132. [f] Ib. p. 373.

[g] Epiphanius omits the Acts of the apostles. This must have been an accidental mistake either in him or in some copyist of his work, for he elsewhere expressly refers to this book, and ascribes it to Luke.

VI. Within the ſame period, Jerome, the moſt learned Chriſtian writer of his age, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Teſtament, recognizing every book now received, with the intimation of a doubt concerning the epiſtle to the Hebrews alone, and taking not the leaſt notice of any book which is not now received.[a]

VII. Contemporary with Jerome, who lived in Paleſtine, was St. Auguſtine in Africa, who publiſhed likewiſe a catalogue without joining to the ſcriptures, as books of authority, any other eccleſiaſtical writing whatever, and without omitting one which we at this day acknowledge.[b]

VIII. And with theſe concurs another contemporary writer, Ruſin, a preſbyter of Aquileia, whoſe catalogue, like their's, is perfect and unmixed, and concludes with theſe remarkable words: "Theſe are the volumes which the fathers have included in the canon, and out of which they would have us prove the doctrine of our faith."[c]

SECT. XI.

Theſe propoſitions cannot be predicated of any of thoſe books, which are commonly called apochryphal books of the New Teſtament.

I DO not know that the objection taken from apocryphal writings is at preſent much relied on by ſcholars. But there are many, who, hearing that various goſpels exiſted in ancient times under the names of the apoſtles, may have taken up a notion, that the ſelection of our preſent goſpels from the reſt, was rather an arbitrary or accidental choice, than founded in any clear and certain cauſe of preference. To theſe it may be very uſeful to know the truth of the caſe. I obſerve therefore,

I. That, beſide our goſpels and the Acts of the apoſtles, no Chriſtian hiſtory, claiming to be written by an apoſtle or apoſtolical man, is quoted within three hundred years after the birth of Chriſt, by any writer now extant, or known; or, if quoted, is not quoted with marks of cenſure and rejection.

I have not advanced this aſſertion without inquiry; and I doubt not, but that the paſſages cited by Mr. Jones and Dr. Lardner, under the ſeveral titles which the apocryphal books bear; or a reference to the places where they are mention-

[a] Vol. X. p. 77. [b] Ib. p. 213. [c] Ib. p. 187.

ed, as collected in a very accurate table, published in the year 1773, by the Rev. J. Atkinson, will make out the truth of the proposition to the satisfaction of every fair and competent judgment. If there be any book which may seem to form an exception to the observation, it is a Hebrew gospel, which was circulated under the various titles of the gospel according to the Hebrews, the gospel of the Nazarenes, of the Ebionites, sometimes called of the twelve, by some ascribed to St. Matthew. This gospel is *once* and only *once*, cited by Clement Alexandrinus, who lived, the reader will remember, in the latter part of the second century, and which same Clement quotes one or other of our four gospels in almost every page of his work. It is also twice mentioned by Origen, A. D. 230; and both times with marks of diminution and discredit. And this is the ground upon which the exception stands. But what is still more material to observe, is, that this gospel, in the main, agreed with our present gospel of St. Matthew.[a]

Now if, with this account of the apocryphal gospels, we compare what we have read, concerning the canonical scriptures in the preceding sections; or even recollect that general, but well-founded assertion of Dr. Lardner's, "that in the remaining works of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, who all lived in the two first centuries, there are more, and larger quotations of the small volume of the new Testament, than of all the works of Cicero, by writers of all characters, for several ages;"[b] and if to this we add, that notwithstanding the loss of many works of the primitive times of Christianity, we have, within the above-mentioned period, the remains of Christian writers, who lived in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, the part of Africa that used the Latin tongue, in Crete, Greece, Italy, and Gaul, in all which remains, references are found to our evangelists; I apprehend, that we shall perceive a clear and broad line of division, between those writings, and all others pretending to a similar authority.

II. But beside certain *histories* which assumed the names of apostles, and which were forgeries properly so called, there were some other Christian writings, in the whole or in part of an

[a] In applying to this gospel, what Jerome in the latter end of the fourth century has mentioned of a Hebrew gospel, I think it probable that we sometimes confound it with a Hebrew copy of St. Matthew's gospel, whether an original or version, which was then extant.

[b] Lard. Cred. vol. XII. p. 53.

hiſtorical nature, which, though not forgeries, are denominated apocryphal, as being of an uncertain, or of no authority.

Of this ſecond claſs of writings, I have found only two, which are noticed by any author of the three firſt centuries, without expreſs terms of condemnation; and theſe are, the one, a book entitled the Preaching of Peter, quoted repeatedly by Clement Alexandrinus, A. D. 196; the other, a book entitled the Revelation of Peter, upon which the above-mentioned Clement Alexandrinus is ſaid, by Euſebius, to have written notes; which is twice cited in a work ſtill extant, aſcribed to the ſame author.

I conceive therefore, that the propoſition we have before advanced, even after it hath been ſubjected to every exception, of every kind that can be alleged, ſeparates, by a wide interval, our hiſtorical ſcriptures, from all other writings which profeſs to give an account of the ſame ſubject.

We may be permitted however to add,

1. That there is no evidence, that any ſpurious or apocryphal books whatever, exiſted in the firſt century of the Chriſtian era; in which century all our hiſtorical books are proved to have been extant. "There are no quotations of any ſuch books in the apoſtolical fathers, by whom I mean Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp, whoſe writings reach from about the year of our Lord 70, to the year 108;" (and ſome of whom have quoted each and every one of our hiſtorical ſcriptures) "I ſay this," adds Dr. Lardner, "becauſe I think it has been proved."[a]

2. Theſe apocryphal writings were not read in the churches of Chriſtians;

3. Were not admitted into their volume;

4. Do not appear in their catalogues;

5. Were not noticed by their adverſaries;

6. Were not alleged by different parties, as of authority in their controverſies;

7. Were not the ſubjects amongſt them, of commentaries, verſions, collations, expoſitions.

Finally; beſide the ſilence of three centuries, or, evidence within that time of their rejection, they were, with a conſent nearly univerſal, reprobated by Chriſtian writers of ſucceeding ages.

[a] Ib. vol. XII. p. 158.

Although it be made out by these observations, that the books in question never obtained any degree of credit and notoriety, which can place them in competition with our scriptures, yet it appears from the writings of the fourth century, that many such existed in that century, and in the century preceding it. It may be difficult at this distance of time to account for their origin. Perhaps the most probable explication is, that they were in general composed with a design of making a profit by the sale. Whatever treated of the subject would find purchasers. It was an advantage taken of the pious curiosity of unlearned Christians. With a view to the same purpose, they were many of them adapted to the particular opinions of particular sects, which would naturally promote their circulation amongst the favourers of those opinions. After all, they were probably much more obscure than we imagine. Except the gospel according to the Hebrews, there is none, of which we hear more, than the gospel of the Egyptians; yet there is good reason to believe that Clement, a presbyter of Alexandria in Egypt, A. D. 184, and a man of almost universal reading, had never seen it.[a] A gospel according to Peter, was another of the most ancient books of this kind; yet Serapion, bishop of Antioch, A. D. 200, had not read it, when he heard of such a book being in the hands of the Christians of Rhossus in Cilicia; and speaks of obtaining a sight of this gospel from some sectaries who used it.[b] Even of the gospel of the Hebrews, which confessedly stands at the head of the catalogue, Jerome, at the end of the fourth century, was glad to procure a copy by the favour of the Nazareans of Berea. Nothing of this sort ever happened, or could have happened, concerning our gospels.

One thing is observable of all the apocryphal Christian writings, that they proceed upon the same fundamental history of Christ and his apostles, as that which is disclosed in our scriptures. The mission of Christ, his power of working miracles, his communication of that power to the apostles, his passion, death and resurrection, are assumed or asserted by every one of them. The names under which some of them came forth, are the names of men of eminence in our histories. What these books give, are not contradictions, but unauthorized additions. The principal facts are supposed, the principal agents the same; which shews that these points were too much fixed to be altered or disputed.

[a] Jones, vol. I. p. 243. [b] Lard. Cred. vol. II. p. 557.

If there be any book of this description, which appears to have imposed upon some considerable number of learned Christians, it is the Sybellyne oracles; but, when we reflect upon the circumstances which facilitated that imposture, we shall cease to wonder either at the attempt, or its success. It was at that time universally understood that such a prophetic writing existed. Its contents were kept secret. This situation afforded to some one a hint, as well as an opportunity, to give out in writing under this name, favourable to the already established persuasion of Christians, and which writing, by the aid and recommendation of these circumstances, would in some degree, it is probable be received. Of the ancient forgery we know but little; what is now produced could not, in my opinion, have imposed upon any one: it is nothing else than the gospel history, woven into Latin verse; perhaps was at first rather a fiction than a forgery; an exercise of ingenuity more than an attempt to deceive.

CHAP. X.

THE reader will now be pleased to recollect, that the two points which form the subject of our present discussion, are, first, that the founder of Christianity, his associates and immediate followers, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings; secondly, that they did so, in attestation of the miraculous history recorded in our scriptures, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of that history.

The argument, by which these two propositions have been maintained by us stands thus:

No historical fact, I apprehend, is more certain, than that the original propagators of Christianity voluntarily subjected themselves to lives of fatigue, danger, and suffering, in the prosecution of their undertaking. The nature of the undertaking; the character of the persons employed in it; the opposition of their tenets to the fixed opinions and expectations of the country, in which they first advanced them; their undissembled condemnation of the religion of all other countries; their total want of power, authority, or force, render it in the highest degree probable that this must have been the case. The probability is increased, by what we know of the fate of the founder

of the inſtitution, who was put to death for his attempt; and by what we alſo know, of the cruel treatment of the converts to the inſtitution, within thirty years after its commencement; both which points are atteſted by heathen writers, and being once admitted, leave it very incredible, that the primitive emiſſaries of the religion, who exerciſed their miniſtry, firſt, amongſt the people who had deſtroyed their maſter, and, afterwards, amongſt thoſe who perſecuted their converts, ſhould themſelves eſcape with impunity, or purſue their purpoſe in eaſe and ſafety. This probability, thus ſuſtained by foreign teſtimony, is advanced, I think, to hiſtorical certainty, by the evidence of our own books; by the accounts of a writer, who was the companion of the perſons whoſe ſufferings he relates; by the letters of the perſons themſelves; by predictions of perſecutions aſcribed to the founder of the religion, which predictions would not have been inſerted in his hiſtory, much leſs have been ſtudiouſly dwelt upon, if they had not accorded with the event, and which, even if falſely aſcribed to him, could only have been ſo aſcribed, becauſe the event ſuggeſted them; laſtly, by inceſſant exhortations to fortitude and patience, and by an earneſtneſs, repetition, and urgency upon the ſubject, which were unlikely to have appeared, if there had not been, at the time, ſome extraordinary call for the exerciſe of theſe virtues.

It is made out alſo, I think, with ſufficient evidence, that both the teachers and converts of the religion, in conſequence of their new profeſſion, took up a new courſe of life and behaviour.

The next great queſtion is, what they did this FOR. That it was *for* a miraculous ſtory of ſome kind or other, is to my apprehenſion extremely manifeſt; becauſe, as to the fundamental article, the deſignation of the perſon, viz. that this particular perſon, Jeſus of Nazareth, ought to be received as the Meſſiah, or as a meſſenger from God, they neither had, nor could have, any thing but miracles to ſtand upon. That the exertions and ſufferings of the apoſtles were *for* the ſtory which we have now, is proved by the conſideration, that this ſtory is tranſmitted to us by two of their own number, and by two others perſonally connected with them; that the peculiarity of the narratives prove, that the writers claimed to poſſeſs circumſtantial information, that from their ſituation they had full opportunity of acquiring ſuch information, that they certainly, at leaſt, knew what their colleagues, their companions, their maſters taught;

that each of these books contains enough to prove the truth of the religion; that, if any one of them therefore be genuine it is sufficient; that the genuineness however of all of them is made out, as well by the general arguments which evince the genuineness of the most undisputed remains of antiquity, as also by peculiar and specific proofs; viz. by citations from them in writings belonging to a period immediately contiguous to that in which they were published; by the distinguished regard paid by early Christians to the authority of these books (which regard was manifested by their collecting of them into a volume, appropriating to that volume titles of peculiar respect, translating them into various languages, digesting them into harmonies, writing commentaries upon them, and still more conspicuously, by the reading of them in their public assemblies in all parts of the world) by an universal agreement with respect to *these* books, whilst doubts were entertained concerning some others; by contending sects appealing to them; by the early adversaries of the religion not disputing their genuineness, but, on the contrary, treating them as the depositaries of the history upon which the religion was founded; by many formal catalogues of these, as of certain and authoritative writings, published in different and distant parts of the Christian world; lastly, by the absence or defect of the above-cited topics of evidence, when applied to any other histories of the same subject.

These are strong arguments to prove, that the books actually proceeded from the authors whose names they bear; (and have always borne, for there is not a particle of evidence to show that they ever went under any other) but the strict genuineness of the books is perhaps more than is necessary to the support of our proposition. For even supposing that by reason of the silence of antiquity, or the loss of records, we knew not who were the writers of the four gospels, yet the fact, that they were received as authentic accounts of the transaction upon which the religion rested, and were received as such by Christians at or near the age of the apostles, by those whom the apostles had taught, and by societies which the apostles had founded; this fact, I say, connected with the consideration, that they are corroborative of each other's testimony, and that they are further corroborated by another contemporary history, taking up the story where they had left it, and, in a narrative built upon that story, accounting for the rise and production of changes in the world, the effects of which subsist at this day; connected, more-

over, with the confirmation which they receive, from letters written by the apoſtles themſelves, which both aſſume the ſame general ſtory, and as often as occaſions lead them to do ſo, allude to particular parts of it; and connected alſo with the reflection, that if the apoſtles delivered any different ſtory, it is loſt; (the preſent and no other being referred to by a ſeries of Chriſtian writers, down from their age to our own; being likewiſe recognized in a variety of inſtitutions, which prevailed, early and univerſally, amongſt the diſciples of the religion) and that ſo great a change, as the oblivion of one ſtory and the ſubſtitution of another, under ſuch circumſtances, could not have taken place; this evidence would be deemed, I apprehend, ſufficient to prove concerning theſe books, that, whoever were the authors of them, they exhibit the ſtory which the apoſtles told, and for which, conſequently, they acted, and they ſuffered.

If it be ſo, the religion muſt be true. Theſe men could not be deceivers. By only not bearing teſtimony, they might have avoided all their ſufferings, and have lived quietly. Would men, in ſuch circumſtances, pretend to have ſeen what they never ſaw; aſſert facts which they had no knowledge of; bring upon themſelves, for nothing, enmity and hatred, danger and death?

PROPOSITION II.

CHAP. I.

Our first proposition was, "*that there is satisfactory evidence, that many, pretending to be orginal witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*"

Our second proposition, and which now remains to be treated of, is, "*that there is* NOT *satisfactory evidence, that persons pretending to be original witnesses of any other similar miracles, have acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts.*"

I ENTER upon this part of my argument, by declaring how far my belief in miraculous accounts goes. If the reformers in the time of Wychliff, or of Luther; or those of England, in the time of Henry the Eighth, or of Queen Mary; or the founders of our religious sects since, such as were Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley in our times, had undergone the life of toil and exertion, of danger and suffering, which we know that many of them did undergo, *for* a miraculous story; that is to say, if they had founded their public ministry upon the allegation of miracles wrought within their own knowledge, and upon narratives which could not be resolved into delusion or mistake; and if it had appeared, that their conduct really had its origin in these accounts, I should have believed them. Or, to borrow an instance which will be familiar to every one of my readers—If the late Mr. Howard had undertaken his labours and journies in attestation and in consequence of a clear and sensible miracle, I should have believed him also. Or, to represent the same thing under a third supposition—If Socrates had professed to perform public miracles at Athens; if the friends of Socrates, Phædo, Cebes, Crito, and Simmias, together with Plato, and many of his followers, relying upon the attestation which these miracles afforded to his pretensions, had, at the hazard of their

lives, and the certain expenſe of their eaſe and tranquillity, gone about Greece, after his death, to publiſh and propagate his doctrines; and if theſe things had come to our knowledge, in the ſame way, as that in which the life of Socrates is now tranſmitted to us, through the hands of his companions and diſciples, that is, by writings received without doubt as theirs, from the age in which they were publiſhed to the preſent, I ſhould have believed this likewiſe. And my belief would, in each caſe, be much ſtrengthened, if the ſubject of the miſſion were of importance to the conduct and happineſs of human life; if it teſtified any thing which it behoved mankind to know from ſuch authority; if the nature of what it delivered required the ſort of proof which it alleged; if the occaſion was adequate to the interpoſition, the end worthy of the means. In the laſt caſe, my faith would be much confirmed, if the effects of the tranſaction remained; more eſpecially, if a change had been wrought, at the time, in the opinion and conduct of ſuch numbers, as to lay the foundation of an inſtitution, and of a ſyſtem of doctrines, which had ſince overſpread the greateſt part of the civilized world. I ſhould have believed, I ſay, the teſtimony, in theſe caſes; yet none of them do more, than come up to the apoſtolic hiſtory.

If any one chooſe to call aſſent to this evidence, credulity, it is at leaſt incumbent upon him to produce examples, in which the ſame evidence hath turned out to be fallacious. And this contains the preciſe queſtion which we are now to agitate.

In ſtating the compariſon between our evidence, and what our adverſaries may bring into competition with our's, we will divide the diſtinctions which we wiſh to propoſe into two kinds, thoſe which relate to the proof, and thoſe which relate to the miracles. Under the former head we may lay out of the caſe,

I. Such accounts of ſupernatural events, as are found only in hiſtories, by ſome ages poſterior to the tranſaction; and of which it is evident that the hiſtorian could know little more than his reader. Our's is contemporary hiſtory. This difference alone removes out of our way the miraculous hiſtory of Pythagoras, who lived five hundred years before the Chriſtian era, written by Porphyry and Jamblicus, who lived three hundred years after that era; the prodigies of Livy's hiſtory; the fables of the heroic ages; the whole of the Greek and Roman, as well as of the Gothic mythology; a great part of the legendary hiſtory of Popiſh ſaints, the very beſt atteſted of which,

is extracted from the certificates that are exhibited during the proceſs of their canonization, a ceremony which ſeldom takes place till a century after their deaths. It applies alſo with conſiderable force to the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus which are contained in a ſolitary hiſtory of his life, publiſhed by Philoſtratus, above a hundred years after his death; and, in which, whether Philoſtratus had any prior account to guide him depends upon his ſingle unſupported aſſertion. Alſo to ſome of the miracles of the third century, eſpecially to one extraordinary inſtance, the account of Gregory, biſhop of Neocæſarea, called Thaumaturgus, delivered in the writings of Gregory of Nyſſen, who lived one hundred and thirty years after the ſubject of his panegyric.

The value of this circumſtance is ſhown to have been accurately exemplified, in the hiſtory of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the order of Jeſuits.[a] His life, written by a companion of his, and by one of the order, was publiſhed about fifteen years after his death. In which life, the author, ſo far from aſcribing any miracles to Ignatius, induſtriouſly ſtates the reaſons, why he was not inveſted with any ſuch power. The life was re-publiſhed fifteen years afterwards with the addition of many circumſtances, which were the fruit, the author ſays, of farther inquiry, and of diligent examination; but ſtill with a total ſilence about miracles. When Ignatius had been dead near ſixty years, the Jeſuits conceiving a wiſh to have the founder of their order placed in the Roman calendar, began, as it ſhould ſeem, for the firſt time to attribute to him a catalogue of miracles, which could not then be diſtinctly diſproved; and which there was in thoſe who governed the church, a ſtrong diſpoſition to admit upon the moſt ſlender proofs.

II. We may lay out of the caſe, accounts publiſhed in one country, of what paſſed in a diſtant country, without any proof that ſuch accounts were known or received at home. In the caſe of Chriſtianity, Judea, which was the ſcene of the tranſaction, was the centre of the miſſion. The ſtory was publiſhed in the place in which it was acted. The church of Chriſt was firſt planted at Jeruſalem itſelf. With that church others correſponded. From thence the primitive teachers of the inſtitution went forth; thither they aſſembled. The church of Jeruſalem and the ſeveral churches of Judea ſubſiſted from the be-

[a] Douglaſs's Criterion of Miracles, p. 74.

ginning, and for many ages,[a] received alſo the ſame books and the ſame accounts as other churches did.

This diſtinction diſpoſes, amongſt others, of the abovementioned miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, moſt of which are related to have been performed in India, no evidence remaining that either the miracles aſcribed to him, or the hiſtory of thoſe miracles, were ever heard of in India. Thoſe of Francis Xavier, the Indian miſſionary, with many others of the Romiſh breviary, are liable to the ſame objection, viz. that the accounts of them were publiſhed at a vaſt diſtance from the ſuppoſed ſcene of the wonders.[b]

III. We lay out of the caſe *tranſient* rumours. Upon the firſt publication of an extraordinary account, or even of an article of ordinary intelligence, no one, who is not perſonally acquainted with the tranſaction, can know whether it be true or falſe, becauſe any man may publiſh any ſtory. It is in the future confirmation, or contradiction of the account; in its permanency, or its diſappearance; its dying away into ſilence, or its increaſing in notoriety; its being followed up by ſubſequent accounts, and being repeated in different and independent accounts, that ſolid truth is diſtinguiſhed from fugitive lies. This diſtinction is altogether on the ſide of Chriſtianity. The ſtory did not drop. On the contrary, it was ſucceeded by a train of actions and events dependent upon it. The accounts which we have in our hands were compoſed after the firſt reports muſt have ſubſided. They were followed by a train of writings upon the ſubject. The hiſtorical teſtimonies of the tranſaction were many and various, and connected with letters, diſcourſes, controverſies, apologies, ſucceſſively produced by the ſame tranſaction.

IV. We may lay out of the caſe what I call *naked* hiſtory. It has been ſaid, that if the prodigies of the Jewiſh hiſtory had been found only in fragments of Manetho, or Berofus, we ſhould have paid no regard to them: and I am willing to admit this. If we knew nothing of the fact but from the fragment; if we poſſeſſed no proof that theſe accounts had been credited and acted upon, from times, probably, as ancient as the accounts themſelves; if we had no viſible effects connected with the hiſtory, no ſubſequent or collateral teſtimony

[a] The ſucceſſion of many eminent biſhops of Jeruſalem, in the three firſt centuries, is diſtinctly preſerved, as Alexander, A. D. 212, who ſucceeded Narciſſus, then 116 years old.

[b] Doug. Crit. p. 84.

to confirm it; under these circumstances, I think that it would be undeserving of credit. But this certainly is not our case. In appreciating the evidence of Christianity, the books are to be combined with the institution; with the prevalency of the religion at this day; with the time and place of its origin, which are acknowledged points; with the circumstances of its rise and progress, as collected from external history; with the fact of our present books being received by the votaries of the institution from the beginning; with that of other books coming after these, filled with accounts of the effects and consequences resulting from the transaction, or referring to the transaction, or built upon it; lastly, with the consideration of the number and variety of the books themselves, the different writers from which they proceed, the different views with which they were written, so disagreeing, as to repel the suspicion of confederacy, so agreeing, as to show that they were founded in a common original, i. e. in a story substantially the same. Whether this proof be satisfactory or not, it is properly a cumulation of evidence, by no means a naked or solitary record.

V. A mark of historical truth, although only in a certain way, and to a certain degree, is *particularity* in names, dates, places, circumstances, and in the order of events preceding or following the transaction: of which kind, for instance, is the particularity in the description of St. Paul's voyage and shipwreck, in the 27th chapter of the Acts, which no man, I think can read without being convinced that the writer was there; and also in the account of the cure and examination of the blind man, in the ninth chapter of St. John's gospel, which bears every mark of personal knowledge on the part of the historian.[a] I do not deny that fiction has often the particularity of truth; but then it is of studied and elaborate fiction, or of a formal attempt to deceive, that we observe this. Since, however, experience proves that particularity is not confined to truth, I have stated that it is a proof of truth, only to a certain extent, i. e. it reduces the question to this, whether we can depend or not upon the probity of the relator; which is a considerable advance in our present argument; for an express attempt to deceive, in which case alone particularity can appear without truth, is charged upon the evangelists by few. If the historian acknowledge himself to have received his intelligence from others, the

[a] Both these chapters ought to be read for the sake of this very observation.

particularity of the narrative ſhows, *primâ facie*, the accuracy of his inquiries, and the fulneſs of his information. This remark belongs to St. Luke's hiſtory. Of the particularity which we allege, many examples may be found in all the goſpels. And it is very difficult to conceive, that ſuch numerous particularities, as are almoſt every where to be met with in the ſcriptures, ſhould be raiſed out of nothing, or be ſpun out of the imagination, without any fact to go upon.[a]

It is to be remarked, however, that this particularity is only to be looked for in direct hiſtory. It is not natural in references or alluſions, which yet, in other reſpects afford often, as far as they go, the moſt unſuſpicious evidence.

VI. We lay out of the caſe ſuch ſtories of ſupernatural events, as require, on the part of the hearer, nothing more than an *otioſe* aſſent; ſtories upon which nothing depends, in which no intereſt is involved, nothing is to be done or changed in conſequence of believing them. Such ſtories are credited, if the careleſs aſſent that is given to them deſerve that name, more by the indolence of the hearer than by his judgment; or, though not much credited, are paſſed from one to another without inquiry or reſiſtance. To this caſe, and to this caſe alone, belongs what is called the love of the marvellous. I have never known it carry men further. Men do not ſuffer perſecution from the love of the marvellous. Of the indifferent nature we are ſpeaking of, are moſt vulgar errors and popular ſuperſtitions: moſt, for inſtance, of the current reports of apparitions. Nothing depends upon their being true or falſe. But not, ſurely, of this kind were the alleged miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles. They decided, if true, the moſt important queſtion, upon which the human mind can fix its anxiety. They claimed to regulate the opinions of mankind, upon ſubjects in which they are not only deep-

a "There is always ſome truth where there are conſiderable particularities related; and they always ſeem to bear ſome proportion to one another. Thus there is a great want of the particulars of time, place, and perſons, in Manetho's account of the Egyptian Dynaſties, Eteſias's of the Aſſyrian kings, and thoſe which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of Greece; and agreeably thereto, theſe accounts have much fiction and falſehood, with ſome truth: whereas Thucydides's hiſtory of the Peloponneſian war, and Cæſar's of the war in Gaul, in both which the particulars of time, place, and perſons are mentioned, are univerſally eſteemed true to a great degree of exactneſs." Hartley, vol. II. p. 109.

ly concerned, but usually refractory and obstinate. Men could not be utterly careless in such a case as this. If a Jew took up the story, he found his darling partiality to his own nation and law wounded; if a Gentile, he found his idolatry and polytheism reprobated and condemned. Whoever entertained the account, whether Jew or Gentile, could not avoid the following reflection:—"If these things be true, I must give up the opinions and principles in which I have been brought up, the religion in which my fathers lived and died." It is not conceivable that any man should do this upon any idle report or frivolous account, or, indeed, without being fully satisfied and convinced of the truth and credibility of the narrative to which he trusted. But it did not stop at opinions. They who believed Christianity, acted upon it. Many made it the express business of their lives to publish the intelligence. It was inquired of those, who admitted that intelligence, to change forthwith their conduct and their principles, to take up a different course of life, to part with their habits and gratifications, and begin a new set of rules and system of behaviour. The apostles, at least, were interested not to sacrifice their ease, their fortunes, and their lives, for an idle tale; multitudes beside them were induced, by the same tale to encounter opposition, danger and sufferings.

If it be said, that the mere promise of a future state would do all this, I answer, that the mere promise of a future state, without any evidence to give credit or assurance to it, would do nothing. A few wandering fishermen talking of a resurrection of the dead could produce no effect. If it be further said, that men easily believe, what they anxiously desire, I again answer that in my opinion, the very contrary of this is nearer the truth. Anxiety of desire, earnestness of expectation, the vastness of an event, rather causes men to disbelieve, to doubt, to dread a fallacy, to distrust, and to examine. When our Lord's resurrection was first reported to the apostles, they did not believe, we are told, for joy. This was natural, and is agreeable to experience.

VII. We have laid out of the case those accounts, which require no more than a simple assent; and we now also lay out of the case those which come merely *in affirmance* of opinions already formed. This last circumstance it is of the utmost importance to notice well. It has long been observed, that Popish miracles happen in Popish countries; that they make no converts; which proves that stories are accepted, when they fall

in with principles already fixed, with the public sentiments, or with the sentiments of a party already engaged on the side the miracle supports, which would not be attempted to be produced in the face of enemies, in opposition to reigning tenets or favourite prejudices, or when if they believed, the belief must draw men away from their pre-conceived and habitual opinions, from their modes of life and rules of action. In the former case, men may not only receive a miraculous account, but may both act and suffer on the side and in the cause which the miracle supports, yet not act or suffer *for* the miracle, but in pursuance of a prior persuasion. The miracle, like any other argument which only confirms what was before believed, is admitted with little examination. In the moral, as in the natural world, it is *change* which requires a cause. Men are easily fortified in their old opinions, driven from them with great difficulty. Now, how does this apply to the Christian history? the miracles there recorded were wrought in the midst of enemies, under a government, a priesthood and a magistracy decidedly and vehemently adverse to them and to the pretensions which they supported. They were Protestant miracles in a Popish country; they were Popish miracles in the midst of Protestants. They produced a change; they established a society upon the spot adhering to the belief of them; they made converts, and those who were converted, gave up to the testimony their most fixed opinions, and most favourite prejudices. They who acted and suffered in the cause, acted and suffered *for* the miracles; for there was no anterior persuasion to induce them, no prior reverence, prejudice or partiality to take hold of. Jesus had not one follower when he set up his claim. His miracles gave birth to his sect. No part of this description belongs to the ordinary evidence of heathen or Popish miracles. Even most of the miracles alleged to have been performed by Christians, in the second and third century of its era, want this confirmation. It constitutes indeed a line of partition between the origin and progress of Christianity. Frauds and fallacies might mix themselves with the progress, which could not possibly take place in the commencement of the religion; at least according to any laws of human conduct that we are acquainted with. What should suggest to the first propagators of Christianity, especially to fishermen, tax-gatherers, and husbandmen, such a thought as that of changing the religion of the world; what could bear them through the difficulties, in which the attempt engaged

them; what could procure any degree of ſucceſs to the attempt; are queſtions which apply, with great force, to the ſetting out of the inſtitution, with leſs to every future ſtage of it.

To hear ſome men talk, one would ſuppoſe the ſetting up of a religion by miracles to be a thing of every day's experience, whereas the whole current of hiſtory is againſt it. Hath any founder of a new ſect amongſt Chriſtians pretended to miraculous powers and ſucceeded by his pretenſions? "Were theſe powers claimed or exerciſed by the founders of the ſects of the Waldenſes and Albigenſes? Did Wichliff in England pretend to it? Did Huſs or Jerome in Bohemia? Did Luther in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, or any of the reformers advance this plea?"[a] The French prophets, in the beginning of the preſent century, ventured to allege miraculous evidence, and immediately ruined their cauſe by their temerity. "Concerning the religion of ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, of China, a ſingle miracle cannot be named, that was ever offered as a teſt of any of thoſe religions *before* their eſtabliſhment.[b]

We may add to what has been obſerved, of the diſtinction which we are conſidering, that, where miracles are alleged merely in affirmance of a prior opinion, they who believe the doctrine may ſometimes propagate a belief of the miracles which they do not themſelves entertain. This is the caſe of what are called *pious* frauds; but it is a caſe I apprehend, which takes place, ſolely in ſupport of a perſuaſion already eſtabliſhed. At leaſt it does not hold of the apoſtolical hiſtory. If the apoſtles did not believe the miracles, they did not believe the religion; and, without this belief, where was the *piety*, what place was there for any thing, which could bear the name or colour of piety, in publiſhing and atteſting miracles in its behalf? If it be ſaid that many promote the belief of revelation and of any accounts which favour that belief, becauſe they think them, whether well or ill founded, of public and political utility, I anſwer, that if a character exiſt, which can with leſs juſtice than another be aſcribed to the founders of the Chriſtian religion, it is that of politicians, or of men capable of entertaining political views. The truth is, that there is no aſſignable character, which will account for the conduct of the apoſtles, ſuppoſing their ſtory to be

[a] Campbell on Miracles, p. 120. ed. 1766.

[b] Adams on Mir. p. 75.

falſe. If bad men, what could induce them to take ſuch pains to promote virtue? If good men, they would not have gone about the country with a ſtring of lies in their mouths.

In appreciating the credit of any miraculous ſtory, theſe are diſtinctions which relate to the evidence. There are other diſtinctions, of great moment in the queſtion, which relate to the miracles themſelves. Of which latter kind the following ought carefully to be retained.

I. It is not neceſſary to admit as a miracle, what can be reſolved into a falſe perception. Of this nature was the demon of Socrates; the viſions of St. Anthony, and of many others; the viſion which Lord Herbert of Cherbury deſcribes himſelf to have ſeen; Colonel Gardiner's viſion, as related in his life, written by Dr. Doddridge. All theſe may be accounted for by a momentary inſanity; for the characteriſtic ſymptom of human madneſs is the riſing up in the mind of images not diſtinguiſhable by the patient from impreſſions upon the ſenſes.[a] The caſes, however, in which the poſſibility of this deluſion exiſts, are divided from the caſes in which it does not exiſt, by many, and thoſe not obſcure marks. They are, for the moſt part, caſes of viſions or voices. The object is hardly ever touched. The viſion ſubmits not to be handled. One ſenſe does not confirm another. They are likewiſe almoſt always caſes of a *ſolitary* witneſs. It is in the higheſt degree improbable, and I know not, indeed, whether it hath ever been the fact, that the ſame derangement of the mental organs ſhould ſeize different perſons at the ſame time; a derangement, I mean, ſo much the ſame, as to repreſent to their imagination the ſame objects. Laſtly, theſe are always caſes of *momentary* miracles; by which term I mean to denote miracles, of which the whole exiſtence is of ſhort duration, in contradiſtinction to miracles which are attended with permanent effects. The appearance of a ſpectre, the hearing of a ſupernatural ſound, is a momentary miracle. The ſenſible proof is gone, when the apparition or ſound is over. But if a perſon born blind be reſtored to ſight, a notorious cripple to the uſe of his limbs, or a dead man to life, here is a permanent effect produced by ſupernatural means. The change indeed was inſtantaneous, but the proof continues. The ſubject of the miracle remains. The man cured or reſtored is there: his former condition was known, and his preſent condition may be ex-

[a] Batty on lunacy.

amined. This can by no possibility be resolved into false perception: and of this kind are by far the greater part of the miracles recorded in the New Testament. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he did not merely move, and speak, and die again; or come out of the grave and vanish away. He returned to his home and his family, and there continued; for we find him, some time afterwards, in the same town, sitting at table with Jesus and his sisters; visited by great multitudes of the Jews, as a subject of curiosity; giving by his presence so much uneasiness to the Jewish rulers, as to beget in them a design of destroying him.[a] No delusion can account for this. The French prophets in England, some time since, gave out that one of their teachers would come to life again, but their enthusiasm never made them believe that they actually saw him alive. The blind man, whose restoration to sight at Jerusalem is recorded in the ninth chapter of St. John's gospel, did not quit the place, or conceal himself from inquiry. On the contrary, he was forthcoming, to answer the call, to satisfy the scrutiny, and to sustain the browbeating of Christ's angry and powerful enemies. When the cripple at the gate of the temple was suddenly cured by Peter,[b] he did not immediately relapse into his former lameness, or disappear out of the city; but boldly and honestly produced himself along with the apostles, when they were brought the next day before the Jewish council.[c] Here, though the miracle was sudden, the proof was permanent. The lameness had been notorious, the cure continued. This, therefore, could not be the effect of any momentary delirium, either in the subject or in the witnesses of the transaction. It is the same with the greatest number of the scripture miracles. There are other cases of a *mixed* nature, in which, although the principal miracle be momentary, some circumstance combined with it is permanent. Of this kind is the history of St. Paul's conversion.[d] The sudden light and sound, the vision and the voice, upon the road to Damascus, were momentary; but Paul's blindness for three days in consequence of what had happened; the communication made to Ananias in another place, and by a vision independent of the former; Ananias finding out Paul in consequence of intelligence so received, and finding him in the condition described, and Paul's

[a] John xii. 1, 2, 9. 10. [b] Acts iii. 2.
[c] Acts iv. 14. [d] Acts ix.

recovery of his ſight upon Ananias laying his hands upon him; are circumſtances, which take the tranſaction, and the principal miracle as included in it, entirely out of the caſe of momentary miracles, or of ſuch as may be accounted for by falſe perceptions. Exactly the ſame thing may be obſerved of Peter's viſion preparatory to the call of Cornelius, and of its connexion with what was imparted in a diſtant place to Cornelius himſelf, and with the meſſage diſpatched by Cornelius to Peter. The viſion might be a dream, the meſſage could not. Either communication, taken ſeparately, might be a deluſion; the concurrence of the two was impoſſible to happen without a ſupernatural cauſe.

Beſide the riſk of deluſion, which attaches upon momentary miracles, there is alſo much more room for impoſture. The account cannot be examined at the moment. And, when that is alſo a moment of hurry and confuſion, it may not be difficult for men of influence to gain credit to any ſtory, which they may wiſh to have believed. This is preciſely the caſe of one of the beſt atteſted of the miracles of old Rome, the appearance of Caſtor and Pollux in the battle fought by Poſthumius with the Latins at the lake Regillus. There is no doubt but that Poſthumius after the battle, ſpread the report of ſuch an appearance. No perſon could deny it, whilſt it was ſaid to laſt. No perſon, perhaps, had any inclination to diſpute it afterwards; or, if they had, could ſay with poſitiveneſs, what was, or what was not ſeen, by ſome or other of the army, in the diſmay, and amidſt the tumult of a battle.

In aſſigning falſe perceptions, as the origin to which ſome miraculous accounts may be referred, I have not mentioned claims to inſpiration, illuminations, ſecret notices or directions, internal ſenſations, or conſciouſneſſes of being acted upon by ſpiritual influences, good or bad, becauſe, theſe appealing to no external proof, however convincing they may be to the perſons themſelves, form no part of what can be accounted miraculous evidence. Their own credibility ſtands upon their alliance with other miracles. The diſcuſſion, therefore, of all ſuch pretenſions may be omitted.

II. It is not neceſſary to bring into the compariſon what may be called *tentative* miracles; that is, where, out of a great number of trials, ſome ſucceed, and in the accounts of which, although the narrative of the ſucceſsful caſes be alone preſerved, and that of the unſucceſsful caſes ſunk, yet enough is

ſtated to ſhow that the caſes produced are only a few out of many in which the ſame means have been employed. This obſervation bears, with conſiderable force, upon the ancient oracles and auguries, in which a ſingle coincidence of the event with the prediction is talked of and magnified, whilſt failures are forgotten, or ſuppreſſed, or accounted for. It is alſo applicable to the cures wrought by relics, and at the tombs of ſaints. The boaſted efficacy of the king's touch, upon which Mr. Hume lays ſome ſtreſs, falls under the ſame deſcription. Nothing is alleged concerning it, which is not alleged of various noſtrums, namely, out of many thouſands who have uſed them, certified proofs of a few who have recovered after them. No ſolution of this ſort is applicable to the miracles of the goſpel. There is nothing in the narrative which can induce, or even allow us to believe, that Chriſt attempted cures in many inſtances, and ſucceeded in a few; or that he ever made the attempt in vain. He did not profeſs to heal every where all that were ſick; on the contrary, he told the Jews, evidently meaning to repreſent his own caſe, that "although many widows were in Iſrael in the days of Elias, when the heaven was ſhut up three years and ſix months, when great famine was throughout all the land, yet unto none of them was Elias ſent, ſave unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow:" and that "many lepers were in Iſrael in the time of Eliſeus the prophet, and none of them was cleanſed ſaving Naaman the Syrian."[a] By which examples he gave them to underſtand, that it was not the nature of a divine interpoſition, or neceſſary to its purpoſe, to be general; ſtill leſs, to anſwer every challenge that might be made, which would teach men to put their faith upon theſe experiments. Chriſt never pronounced the word, but the effect followed.[b] It was not a thouſand ſick that received his benediction, and a few that were benefited: a ſingle paralytic is let down in his bed at Jeſus's feet, in the midſt of the ſur-

[a] Luke iv. 25.

[b] One, and only one, inſtance may be produced in which the *diſciples* of Chriſt do ſeem to have attempted a cure, and not to have been able to perform it. The ſtory is very ingenuouſly and candidly related by three of the evangeliſts.* The patient was afterwards healed by Chriſt himſelf; and the whole tranſaction ſeems to have been intended, as it was well ſuited, to diſplay the ſuperiority of Chriſt above all who performed miracles in his name; a diſtinction which, during his preſence in the world, it might be neceſſary to inculcate by ſome ſuch proof as this.

* *Mark* ix. 14. *Mat.* xiv. 20.

rounding multitude; Jesus bid him walk, and he did so.[a] A man with a withered hand is in the synagogue; Jesus bid him stretch forth his hand, in the presence of the assembly, and it was "restored whole like the other."[b] There was nothing tentative in these cures; nothing that can be explained by the power of accident.

We may observe also that many of the cures which Christ wrought, such as that of a person blind from his birth, also many miracles beside cures, as raising the dead, walking upon the sea, feeding a great multitude with a few loaves and fishes, are of a nature which does not in any wise admit of the supposition of a fortunate experiment.

III. We may dismiss from the question all accounts in which, allowing the phenomenon to be real, the fact to be true, it still remains doubtful whether a miracle were wrought. This is the case with the ancient history of what is called the thundering legion, of the extraordinary circumstances which obstructed the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem by Julian, the circling of the flames and fragrant smell at the martyrdom of Polycarp, the sudden shower that extinguished the fire into which the scriptures were thrown in the Diocletian persecution; Constantine's dream, his inscribing in consequence of it the cross upon his standard and the shields of his soldiers; his victory, and the escape of the standard bearer; perhaps also the imagined appearance of the cross in the heavens, though this last circumstance is very deficient in historical evidence. It is also the case with the modern annual exhibition of liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples. It is a doubt likewise, which ought to be excluded by very special circumstances, from these narratives which relate to the supernatural cure of hypochondriacal and nervous complaints, and of all diseases which are much affected by the imagination. The miracles of the second and third century are, usually, healing the sick, and casting out evil spirits, miracles in which there is room for some error and deception. We hear nothing of causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the lepers to be cleansed.[c] There are also instances in Christian writers of reputed miracles, which were natural operations though not known to be such at the time, as that of articulate speech after the loss of a great part of the tongue.

[a] Mark ii. 3. [b] Mat. xii. 10. [c] Jortin's Rem. vol. II. p. 51.

IV. To the same head of objection nearly, may also be referred accounts, in which the variation of a small circumstance may have transformed some extraordinary appearance, or some critical coincidence of events, into a miracle; stories, in a word, which may be resolved into exaggeration. The miracles of the gospel can by no possibility be explained away in this manner. Total fiction will account for any thing; but no stretch of exaggeration that has any parallel in other histories, no force of fancy upon real circumstances, could produce the narrative which we now have. The feeding of the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes surpasses all bounds of exaggeration. The raising of Lazarus, of the widow's son at Nain, as well as many of the cures which Christ wrought, come not within the compass of misrepresentation. I mean, that it is impossible to assign any position of circumstances, however peculiar, any accidental effects, however extraordinary, any natural singularity, which could supply an origin or foundation to these accounts.

Having thus enumerated several exceptions, which may justly be taken to relations of miracles, it is necessary, when we read the scriptures to bear in our mind this general remark, that although there be miracles recorded in the New Testament, which fall within some or other of the exceptions here assigned, yet that they are united with others, to which none of the same exceptions extend, and that their credibility stands upon this union. Thus the visions and revelations, which St. Paul asserts to have been imparted to him, may not, in their separate evidence, be distinguishable from the visions and revelations which many others have alleged. But here is the difference. St. Paul's pretensions were attested by external miracles wrought by himself, and by miracles wrought in the cause to which these visions relate; or, to speak more properly, the same historical authority which informs us of one, informs us of the other. This is not ordinarily true of the visions of enthusiasts, or even of the accounts in which they are contained. Again, some of Christ's own miracles were *momentary*; as the transfiguration, the appearance and voice from heaven at Christ's baptism, a voice from the clouds upon one occasion afterwards, (John xii. 30.) and some others. It is not denied, that the distinction which we have proposed concerning miracles of this species, applies in diminution of the force of the evidence as much to these instances, as to others. But this is the case, not with all the miracles ascribed to Christ, nor with the greatest part, nor with many. Whatever force

therefore there may be in the objection, we have numerous miracles which are free from it; and even thoſe to which it is applicable, are little affected by it in their credit, becauſe there are few, who, admitting the reſt, will reject *them*. If there be miracles of the New Teſtament, which come within any of the *other* heads into which we have diſtributed the objections, the ſame remark muſt be repeated. And this is one way, in which the unexampled number and variety of the miracles aſcribed to Chriſt, ſtrengthens the credibility of Chriſtianity. For it precludes any ſolution, or conjecture about a ſolution, which imagination, or even which experience might ſuggeſt concerning ſome particular miracles, if conſidered independently of others. The miracles of Chriſt were of various kinds, [a] and performed in great varieties of ſituation, form and manner; at Jeruſalem, the metropolis of the Jewiſh nation and religion, in different parts of Judea and Galilee; in cities, in villages; in ſynagogues, in private houſes; in the ſtreet, in highways; with preparation, as in the caſe of Lazarus, by accident, as in the caſe of the widow's ſon at Nain; when attended by multitudes, and when alone with the patient; in the midſt of his diſciples, and in the preſence of his enemies; with the common people around him, and before ſcribes and phariſees and rulers of the ſynagogues.

I apprehend that, when we remove from the compariſon the caſes which are fairly diſpoſed of by the obſervations that have been ſtated, many caſes will not remain. To thoſe which do remain, we apply this final diſtinction; "that there is not ſatisfactory evidence, that perſons pretending to be original witneſſes of the miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers and ſufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered; and properly in conſequence of their belief of the truth of thoſe accounts."

[a] Not only healing every ſpecies of diſeaſe, but turning water into wine (John ii.;) feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fiſhes (Mat. xiv. 14. Mark vi. 35. Luke ix. 12. John iv. 5.;) walking on the ſea (Mat. xiv. 23.) calming a ſtorm (Mat. viii. 26. Luke viii. 23.;) a celeſtial voice at his baptiſm, and miraculous appearance (Mat. iii. 17. afterwards John xii. 28.;) his transfiguration (Mat. xvii. 1—8. Mark ix. 2. Luke ix. 28. Ep. Peter i. 16, 17.;) raiſing the dead in three diſtinct inſtances (Mat. x. 18. Mark v. 22. Luke viii. 41. Luke vii. 14. John xi.)

CHAP. II.

BUT they, with whom we argue, have undoubtedly a right to elect their own examples. The inſtances, with which Mr. Hume hath choſen to confront the miracles of the New Teſtament, and which, therefore, we are entitled to regard, as the ſtrongeſt which the hiſtory of the world could ſupply to the inquiries of a very acute and learned adverſary, are the three following:

1. The cure of the blind and of a lame man at Alexandria, by the emperor Veſpaſian, as related by Tacitus.

2. The reſtoration of a limb to an attendant in a Spaniſh church, as told by Cardinal de Retz; and

3. The cures ſaid to be performed at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, in the early part of the preſent century.

1. The narrative of Tacitus is delivered in theſe terms: "One of the common people of Alexandria, known to be diſeaſed in his eyes, by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that ſuperſtitious nation worſhip above all other gods, proſtrated himſelf before the emperor, earneſtly imploring from him a remedy for his blindneſs, and entreating, that he would deign to anoint with his ſpittle his cheeks and the balls of his eyes. Another, diſeaſed in his hand, requeſted, by the admonition of the ſame god, that he might be touched by the foot of the emperor. Veſpaſian at firſt derided and deſpiſed their application; afterwards, when they continued to urge their petitions, he, ſometimes, appeared to dread the imputation of vanity; at other times, by the earneſt ſupplication of the patients, and the perſuaſion of his flatterers, to be induced to hope for ſucceſs. At length he commanded an inquiry to be made by phyſicians, whether ſuch blindneſs and debility were vincible by human aid. The report of the phyſicians contained various points; that in the one, the power of viſion was not deſtroyed, but would return, if the obſtacles were removed; that in the other, the diſeaſed joints might be reſtored, if a healing power were applied; that it was, perhaps, agreeable to the gods to do this; that the emperor was elected by divine aſſiſtance; laſtly, that the credit of the ſucceſs would be the emperor's, the ridicule of the diſappointment would fall upon the patients. Veſpaſian, believing that every thing was in the power of his fortune, and that nothing was any longer incredible, whilſt the multitude

which ſtood by, eagerly expected the event, with a countenance expreſſive of joy executed what he was he deſired to do. Immediately the hand was reſtored to its uſe, and light returned to the blind man. They who were preſent, relate both theſe cures, even at this time, when there is nothing to be gained by lying."[a]

Now, although Tacitus wrote this account twenty-ſeven years after the miracle is ſaid to have been performed, and wrote at Rome of what paſſed at Alexandria, and wrote alſo from report; and although it does not appear that he had examined the ſtory, or that he believed it (but rather the contrary) yet I think his teſtimony ſufficient to prove, that ſuch a tranſaction took place; by which I mean, that the two men in queſtion did apply to Veſpaſian, that Veſpaſian did touch the diſeaſed in the manner related, and that a cure was reported to have followed the operation. But the affair labours under a ſtrong and juſt ſuſpicion, that the whole of it was a concerted impoſture brought about by concluſion, between the patients, the phyſician, and the emperor. This ſolution is probable, becauſe there was every thing to ſuggeſt, and every thing to facilitate ſuch a ſcheme. The miracle was calculated to confer honour upon the emperor, and upon the god Serapis. It was achieved in the midſt of the emperor's flatterers and followers; in a city, and amongſt a populace beforehand devoted to his intereſt, and to the worſhip of the god; where it would have been treaſon and blaſphemy together to have contradicted the fame of the cure, or even to have queſtioned it. And what is very obſervable in the account is, that the report of the phyſicians is juſt ſuch a report as would have been made of a caſe, in which no external marks of the diſeaſe exiſted, and which, conſequently, was capable of being eaſily counterfeited, viz. that, in the firſt of the patients the organs of viſion were not deſtroyed, that the weakneſs of the ſecond was in his joints. The ſtrongeſt circumſtance in Tacitus's narration is that the firſt patient was "*notus* tabe oculorum," remarked or notorious for the diſeaſe in his eyes. But this was a circumſtance which might have found its way into the ſtory in its progreſs from a diſtant country, and during an interval of thirty years; or it might be true that the malady of the eyes was notorious, yet that the nature and degree of the diſeaſe had never been aſcertained. A caſe by no means uncommon. The

[a] Tac. Ant. p. 89.

emperor's reserve was easily affected, or it is possible he might not be in the secret. There does not seem to be much weight in the observation of Tacitus, that they who were present continued even then to relate the story, when there was nothing to be gained by the lie. It only proves that those, who had told the story for many years, persisted in it. The state of mind of the witnesses and spectators *at the time*, is the point to be attended to. Still less is there of pertinency in Mr. Hume's eulogium upon the cautious and penetrating genius of the historian; for it does not appear that the historian believed it. The terms in which he speaks of Serapis, the deity to whose interposition the miracle was attributed, scarcely suffer us to suppose that Tacitus thought the miracle to be real, "by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that superstitious nation (dedita superstitionibus gens) worship above all other gods." To have brought this supposed miracle within the limits of comparison with the miracles of Christ, it ought to have appeared, that a person of a low and private station, in the midst of enemies, with the whole power of the country opposing him, with every one around him prejudiced or interested against his claims and character, pretended to perform these cures; and required the spectators, upon the strength of what they saw, to give up their firmest hopes and opinions, and follow *him* through a life of trial and danger; that many were so moved, as to obey his call, at the expense both of every notion in which they had been brought up, and of their ease, safety, and reputation; and that by these beginnings a change was produced in the world, the effects of which remain to this day: a case, both in its circumstances and consequences, very unlike any thing we find in Tacitus's relation.

2. The story taken from the memoirs of Cardinal de Retz, which is the second example alleged by Mr. Hume, is this: "In the church at Saragossa in Spain, the canons shewed me a man whose business it was to light the lamps, telling me that he had been for several years at the gate, with one leg only. I saw him with two."[a]

It is stated by Mr. Hume, that the Cardinal who relates this story, did not believe it; and it no where appears, that he either examined the limb, or asked the patient, or indeed any one, a single question about the matter. An artificial leg,

[a] Liv. 4. A. D. 1654.

wrought with art, would be sufficient, in a place where no such contrivance had ever before been heard of, to give origin and currency to the report. The ecclesiastics of the place would, it is probable, favour the story, inasmuch as it advanced the honour of their image and church. And if *they* patronized it, no other person at Saragossa, in the middle of the last century, would care to dispute it. The story likewise coincided, not less with the wishes and preconceptions of the people, than with the interests of their ecclesiastical rulers; so that there was prejudice backed by authority, and both operating upon extreme ignorance to account for the success of the imposture. If, as I have suggested, the contrivance of an artificial limb was then new, it would not occur to the Cardinal himself to suspect it; especially under the carelessness of mind with which he heard the tale, and the little inclination he felt to scrutinize or expose its fallacy.

3. The miracles related to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, admit in general of this solution. The patients who frequented the tomb, were so affected by their devotion, their expectation, the place, the solemnity, and, above all, by the sympathy of the surrounding multitude, that many of them are thrown into violent convulsions, which convulsions, in certain instances, produced a removal of disorders depending upon obstruction. We shall, at this day, have the less difficulty in admitting the above account, because it is the very same thing, as hath lately been experienced in the operations of animal magnetism; and the report of the French physicians upon that mysterious remedy, is very applicable to the present consideration, viz. that the pretenders to the art, by working upon the imaginations of their patients, were frequently able to produce convulsions; that convulsions so produced are amongst the most powerful, but at the same time, most uncertain and unmanageable applications to the human frame, which can be employed.

Circumstances, which indicate this explication in the case of the Parisian miracles, are the following:

1. They were *tentative*. Out of many thousand sick, infirm, and diseased persons, who resorted to the tomb, the professed history of the miracles contains only nine cures.

2. The convulsions at the tomb are admitted.

3. The diseases were, for the most part, of that sort, which depends upon inaction and obstruction, as dropsies, palsies, and some tumors.

4. The cures were gradual; ſome patients attending many days, ſome ſeveral weeks, and ſome ſeveral months.

5. The cures were many of them incomplete.

6. Others were temporary.[a]

So that all the wonder we are called upon to account for is, that, out of an almoſt innumerable multitude which reſorted to the tomb for the cure of their complaints, and many of whom were there agitated by ſtrong convulſions, a very ſmall proportion experienced a beneficial change in their conſtitution, eſpecially in the action of the nerves and glands.

Some of the caſes alleged do not require that we ſhould have recourſe to this ſolution. The firſt caſe in the catalogue is ſcarcely diſtinguiſhable from the progreſs of a natural recovery. It was that of a young man, who laboured under an inflammation of one eye, and had loſt the ſight of the other. The inflamed eye was relieved, but the blindneſs of the other remained. The inflammation had before been abated by medicine; and the young man, at the time of his attendance at the tomb, was uſing a lotion of laudanum. And, what is a ſtill more material part of the caſe, the inflammation after ſome interval returned. Another caſe was that of a young man who had loſt his ſight by the puncture of an awl, and the diſcharge of aqueous humour through the wound. The ſight which had been gradually returning was much improved during his viſit at the tomb, that is, probably in the ſame degree in which the diſcharged humour was replaced by freſh ſecretions. And it is obſervable that theſe two are the only caſes, which, from their nature, ſhould ſeem unlikely to be affected by convulſions.

In one material reſpect I allow, that the Pariſian miracles were different from thoſe related by Tacitus, and from the Spaniſh miracle of the Cardinal de Retz. They had not, like them all the power and all the prejudice of the country on their ſide to begin with. They were alleged by one party againſt another, by the Janſeniſts againſts the Jeſuits. Theſe were of courſe oppoſed and examined by their adverſaries. The conſequence of which examination was, that many falſehoods were detected, that with ſomething really extraordinary, much fraud appeared to be mixed. And if ſome of the caſes, upon which deſigned miſrepreſentation could not be charged, were not at the time

[a] The reader will find theſe particulars verified in the detail, by the accurate inquiries of the preſent Biſhop of Sarum in his criterion of miracles, p. 131. et ſeq.

satisfactorily accounted for, it was because the efficacy of strong spasmodic affections were not then sufficiently known. Finally, the cause of Jansenism did not rise by the miracles, but sank, although the miracles had the anterior persuasion of all the numerous adherents of that cause to set out with.

These, let us remember, are the strongest examples which the history of ages supplies. In none of them was the miracle *unequivocal;* by none of them were established prejudices and persuasions overthrown; of none of them did the credit make its way, in opposition to authority and power; by none of them were many induced to commit themselves, and that in contradiction to prior opinions, to a life of mortification, danger, and sufferings: none were called upon to attest them, at the expense of their fortunes and safety.[a]

[a] It may be thought that the historian of the Parisian miracles, M. Montgeron, forms an exception to this last assertion. He presented his book (with a suspicion, as it should seem, of the danger of what he was doing) to the king; and was shortly afterwards committed to prison, from which he never came out. Had the miracles been unequivocal, and had M. Montgeron been originally convinced by them, I should have allowed this exception. It would have stood, I think, alone in the argument of our adversaries. But, beside what has been observed of the dubious nature of the miracles, the account, which M. Montgeron has himself left of his conversion, shows both the state of his mind, and *that his persuasion was not built upon external miracles.* "Scarcely had he entered the church-yard, when he was struck," he tells us, "with awe and reverence, having never before heard prayers pronounced with so much ardour and transport, as he observed amongst the supplicants at the tomb. Upon this, throwing himself on his knees, resting his elbows on the tombstone, and covering his face with his hands, he spake the following prayer: *O thou, by whose intercession so many miracles are said to be performed, if it be true that a part of thee surviveth the grave, and that thou hast influence with the Almighty, have pity on the darkness of my understanding, and through his mercy obtain the removal of it.* Having prayed thus, many thoughts, as he sayeth, began to open themselves to his mind; and so profound was his attention, that he continued on his knees four hours, not in the least disturbed by the vast crowd of surrounding supplicants. During this time all the arguments which he ever heard or read in favour of Christianity, occurred to him with so much force, and seemed so strong and convincing, that he went home fully satisfied of the truth of religion in general, and of the holiness and power of that person, who," as he supposed, "had engaged the divine goodness to enlighten his understanding so suddenly." Douglas's Crit. of Mir. p. 214.

PART THE SECOND.

Of the Auxiliary Evidences of Christianity.

CHAP. I.

Prophecy.

Is. lii. 13. liii. "BEHOLD, my ſervant ſhall deal prudently, he ſhall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were aſtoniſhed at thee; his viſage was ſo marred more than any man, and his form more than the ſons of men: ſo ſhall he ſprinkle many nations; the kings ſhall ſhut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them ſhall they ſee; and that which they had not heard ſhall they conſider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he ſhall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him. He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our ſorrows: yet we did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him; and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone aſtray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and from judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; becauſe he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him; he hath put him to grief. When thou ſhalt

make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

These words are extant in a book, purporting to contain the predictions of a writer who lived seven centuries before the Christian era.

That material part of every argument from prophecy, namely, that the words alleged were actually spoken or written before the fact, to which they are applied, took place, or could by any natural means be foreseen, is, in the present instance, incontestible. The record comes out of the custody of adversaries. The Jews, as an ancient father well observed, are our librarians. The passage is in their copies as well as in ours. With many attemps to explain it away, none has ever been made by them to discredit its authenticity.

And, what adds to the force of the quotation is, that it is taken from a writing *declaredly prophetic;* a writing, professing to describe such future transactions and changes in the world, as were connected with the fate and interests of the Jewish nation. It is not a passage in an historical or devotional composition, which, because it turns out to be applicable to some future events, or some future situation of affairs, is presumed to have been oracular. The words of Isaiah were delivered by him in a prophetic character, with the solemnity belonging to that character; and what he so delivered, was all along understood by the Jewish reader to refer to something that was to take place after the time of the author. The public sentiments of the Jews, concerning the design of Isaiah's writings, are set forth in the book of Ecclesiasticus: "He saw, by an excellent spirit, what should come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion. He showed what should come to pass forever, and secret things or ever they came." (ch. xlviii. v. 24.)

It is also an advantage which this prophecy possesses, that it is intermixed with no other subject. It is entire, separate, and uninterruptedly directed to one scene of things.

The application of the prophecy to the evangelic hiſtory is plain and appropriate. Here is no double ſenſe. No figurative language but what is ſufficiently intelligible to every reader of every country. The obſcurities, by which I mean the expreſſions that require a knowledge of local diction, and of local alluſion, are few, and not of great importance. Nor have I found that varieties of reading, or a different conſtruing of the original, produce any material alteration in the ſenſe of the prophecy. Compare the common tranſlation with that of biſhop Lowth, and the difference is not conſiderable. So far as they do differ, biſhop Lowth's corrections, which are the faithful reſult of an accurate examination, bring the deſcription nearer to the New Teſtament hiſtory than it was before. In the fourth verſe of the fifty-third chapter, what our bible renders "ſtricken," he tranſlates "judicially ſtricken:" and in the eighth verſe, the clauſe "he was taken from priſon and from judgment," the biſhop gives "by an oppreſſive judgment he was taken off." The next words to theſe "who ſhall declare his generation," are much cleared up in their meaning by the biſhop's verſion, "his manner of life who would declare," i. e. who would ſtand forth in his defence. The former part of the ninth verſe, "and he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," which inverts the circumſtances of Chriſt's paſſion, the biſhop brings out in an order perfectly agreeable to the event; "and his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb." The words in the eleventh verſe, "by his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many," are in the biſhop's verſion "by the *knowledge of him* ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many."

It is natural to inquire what turn the Jews themſelves give to this prophecy.[a] There is good proof that the ancient Rabbins explained it of their expected Meſſiah;[b] but their modern expoſitors concur, I think, in repreſenting it, as a deſcription of the calamitous ſtate and intended reſtoration of the Jewiſh people, who are here, as they ſay, exhibited under the character of a ſingle perſon. I have not diſcoverd that their expoſition reſts upon any critical arguments, or upon theſe in

a "Vaticinium hoc Eſaiæ eſt carnificina Rabbinorum, de quo aliqui Judæi mihi confeſſi ſunt, Rabbinos ſuos ex propheticis ſcripturis facile ſe extricare potuiſſe, *modo Eſaias tacuiſſet.*" Hulſe Theol. Jud. p. 318. quoted by Poole in loc.

b Hulſe Theol. Jud. p. 430.

any other than a very minute degree. The clauſe in the ninth verſe, which we render "for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken," and in the margin "was the ſtroke upon him," the Jews read, "for the tranſgreſſion of my people was the ſtroke upon *them*." And what they allege in ſupport of the alteration amounts only to this, that the Hebrew pronoun is capable of a plural, as well as of a ſingular ſignification, that is to ſay, is capable of their conſtruction as well as our's.[a] And this is all the variation contended for; the reſt of the prophecy they read as we do. The probability, therefore, of their expoſition is a ſubject of which we are as capable of judging as themſelves.

[a] Biſhop Lowth adopts in this place the reading of the ſeventy, which gives ſmitten *to death*, "for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſmitten to death." The addition of the words "to death," makes an end of the Jewiſh interpretation of the clauſe. And the authority upon which this reading (though not given by the preſent Hebrew text) is adopted, Dr. Kennicot has ſet forth by an argument, not only ſo cogent, but ſo clear and popular, that I beg leave to tranſcribe the ſubſtance of it into this note. "Origen, after having quoted at large this prophecy concerning the Meſſiah, tells us, that having once made uſe of this paſſage, in a diſpute againſt ſome that were accounted wiſe among the Jews, one of them replied, that the words did not mean one man, but one people, the Jews, who were ſmitten of God, and diſperſed among the Gentiles for their converſion; that he then urged many parts of this prophecy, to ſhew the abſurdity of this interpretation, and that he ſeemed to preſs them the hardeſt by this ſentence—"for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſmitten to death." Now, as Origen, the author of the Hexapla, muſt have underſtood Hebrew, we cannot ſuppoſe that he would have urged this laſt text as ſo deciſive, if the Greek verſion had not agreed here with the Hebrew text; nor that theſe wiſe Jews would have been at all diſtreſſed by this quotation, unleſs the Hebrew text had read agreeably to the words "to death," on which the argument principally depended; for by quoting it immediately, they would have triumphed over him and reprobated his Greek verſion. This, whenever they could do it, was their conſtant practice in their diſputes with the Chriſtians. Origen himſelf, who laboriouſly compared the Hebrew text with the Septuagint, has recorded the neceſſity of arguing with the Jews, from ſuch paſſages only, as were in the Septuagint agreeable to the Hebrew. Wherefore, as Origen had carefully compared the Greek verſion of the Septuagint with the Hebrew text; and as he puzzled and confounded the learned Jews, by urging upon the reading "to death" in this place; it ſeems almoſt impoſſible not to conclude, both from Origen's argument, and the ſilence of his Jewiſh adverſaries, that the Hebrew text at that time actually had the word agreeably to the verſion of the ſeventy." Lowth's Iſaiah, p. 242.

This judgment is open indeed to the good ſenſe of every attentive reader. The application which the Jews contend for, appears to me to labour under inſuperable difficulties; in particular, it may be demanded of them to explain, in *whoſe* name or perſon, if the Jewiſh people be the ſufferer, does the prophet ſpeak, when he ſays, "he hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* ſorrows, yet *we* did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of God and afflicted; but he was wounded for *our* tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for *our* iniquities, the chaſtiſement of *our* peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes *we* are healed." Again, the deſcription in the ſeventh verſe, "he was oppreſſed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth," quadrates with no part of the Jewiſh hiſtory with which we are acquainted. The mention of the "grave," and the "tomb," in the ninth verſe, is not very applicable to the fortunes of a nation; and ſtill leſs ſo is the concluſion of the prophecy in the twelfth verſe, which expreſsly repreſents the ſufferings as *voluntary*, and the ſufferer as interceding for the offenders, "becauſe he hath poured out his ſoul unto death, and he was numbered with the tranſgreſſors, and he bare the ſin of many, and made interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors."

There are other prophecies of the Old Teſtament, interpreted by Chriſtians to relate to the goſpel hiſtory, which are deſerving both of great regard, and of a very attentive conſideration; but I content myſelf with ſtating the above, becauſe I think it the cleareſt and the ſtrongeſt of all, and becauſe moſt of the reſt, in order that their value be repreſented with any tolerable degree of fidelity, require a diſcuſſion unſuitable to the limits and nature of this work. The reader will find them diſpoſed in order, and diſtinctly explained in biſhop Chandler's treatiſe upon the ſubject: and he will bear in mind, what has been often, and I think, truly urged by the advocates of Chriſtianity, that there is no other eminent perſon, to the hiſtory of whoſe life ſo many circumſtances can be made to apply. They who object, that much has been done by the power of chance, the ingenuity of accommodation, and the induſtry of reſearch, ought to try whether the ſame, or any thing like it, could be done, if Mahomet, or any other perſon, were propoſed as the ſubject of Jewiſh prophecy.

II. A second head of argument from prophecy, is founded upon our Lord's predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, recorded by three out of the four evangelists.

Luke xxi. 5—25. "And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign shall there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near. Go ye not therefore after them. But, when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences: and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days; for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In terms nearly similar, this discourse is related in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the thirteenth of Mark.

The proſpect of the ſame evils drew from our Saviour, upon another occaſion, the following affecting expreſſions of concern, which are preſerved by St. Luke (xix. 41): "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes; for the days ſhall come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone upon another, becauſe thou kneweſt not the time of thy viſitation." Theſe paſſages are direct and explicit predictions. References to the ſame event, ſome plain, ſome parabolical, or otherwiſe figurative, are found in divers other diſcourſes of our Lord.[a]

The general agreement of the deſcriptions with the event, viz. with the ruin of the Jewiſh nation, and the capture of Jeruſalem under Veſpaſian, thirty-ſix years after Chriſt's death, is moſt evident: and the accordancy in various articles of detail and circumſtance has been ſhewn by many learned writers. It is alſo an advantage to the inquiry, and to the argument built upon it, that we have received a copious account of the tranſaction from Joſephus, a Jewiſh and contemporary hiſtorian. This part of the caſe is perfectly free from doubt. The only queſtion which, in my opinion, can be raiſed upon the ſubject, is, whether the prophecy was really delivered before the event. I ſhall apply, therefore, my obſervations to this point ſolely.

1. The judgment of antiquity, though varying in the preciſe year of the publication of the three goſpels, *concurs* in aſſigning them a date prior to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.[b]

2. This judgment is confirmed by a ſtrong probability ariſing from the courſe of human life. The deſtruction of Jeruſalem took place in the ſeventieth year after the birth of Chriſt. The three evangeliſts, one of whom was his immediate companion, and the other two aſſociated with his companions, were, it is probable, not much younger than he was. They muſt, conſequently, have been far advanced in life when Jeruſalem was taken; and no reaſon has been given why they ſhould defer writing their hiſtories ſo long.

[a] Mat. xxi. 33—46. xxii. 1—7. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xiii. 1—9. xx. 9—20. xxi. 5—13.

[b] Lardner, vol. XIII.

3.[a] If the evangeliſts, at the time of writing the goſpels, had known of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, by which cataſtrophe the prophecies were plainly fulfilled, it is moſt probable, that, in recording the predictions, they would have dropped ſome word or other about the completion; in like manner as Luke, after relating the denunciation of a dearth by Agabus, adds, "which came to paſs in the days of Claudius Cæſar:"[b] whereas the prophecies are given diſtinctly in one chapter of each of the three firſt goſpels, and referred to in ſeveral different paſſages of each, and, in none of all theſe places, does there appear the ſmalleſt intimation that the things ſpoken of were come to paſs. I do admit that it would have been the part of an impoſtor, who wiſhed his readers to believe that his book was written before the event, when in truth it was written after it, to have ſuppreſſed any ſuch intimation carefully. But this was not the character of the authors of the goſpel. Cunning was no quality of their's. Of all writers in the world, they thought the leaſt of providing againſt objections. Moreover, there is no clauſe in any one of them, that makes a profeſſion of having written prior to the Jewiſh wars, which a fraudulent purpoſe would have led them to pretend. They have done neither one thing nor the other. They have neither inſerted any words, which might ſignify to the reader that their accounts were written *before* the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which a ſophiſt would have done; nor have they dropped a hint of the completion of the prophecies recorded by them, which an *undeſigning* writer, writing *after* the event, could hardly, on ſome or other of the many occaſions that preſented themſelves, have miſſed of doing.

4. The admonitions[c] which Chriſt is repreſented to have given to his followers to ſave themſelves by flight, are not eaſily accounted for upon the ſuppoſition of the prophecy being

[a] Le Clerc. Diſſ. III. de quat. ev. Num. VII. p. 541. [b] Acts xi. 28.

[c] Luke xxi. 20, 21. "When ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then know that the deſolation thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midſt of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto."

Matt. xiv. 18. "When ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains; let him which is on the houſe top, not come down to take any thing out of his houſe, neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his clothes."

fabricated after the event. Either the Chriſtians, when the ſiege approached, did make their eſcape from Jeruſalem, or they did not: if they did, they muſt have had the prophecy amongſt them: if they did not know of any ſuch prediction at the time of the ſiege; if they did not take notice of any ſuch warning, it was an improbable fiction, in a writer publiſhing his work near to that time (which, upon any even the loweſt and moſt diſadvantageous ſuppoſition, was the caſe with the goſpels now in our hands) and addreſſing his works to Jews and to Jewiſh converts (which Matthew certainly did) to ſtate that the followers of Chriſt had received admonitions, of which they made no uſe when the occaſion arrived, and of which, experience then recent proved, that thoſe, who were moſt concerned to know and regard them, were ignorant or negligent. Even if the prophecies came to the hands of the evangeliſts through no better vehicle than tradition, it muſt have been by a tradition which ſubſiſted prior to the event. And to ſuppoſe, that, without any authority whatever, without ſo much as even any tradition to guide them, they had forged theſe paſſages, is to impute to them a degree of fraud and impoſture, from every appearance of which their compoſitions are as far removed as poſſible.

5. I think that, if the prophecies had been compoſed after the event, there would have been more ſpecification. The names or deſcriptions of the enemy, the general, the emperor would have been found in them. The deſignation of the time would have been more determinate. And I am fortified in this opinion by obſerving, that the counterfeited prophecies of the Sybilline oracles, of the twelve patriarchs, and, I am inclined to believe, moſt others of the kind, are mere tranſcripts of the hiſtory moulded into a prophetic form.

It is objected that the prophecy of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem is mixed, or connected with expreſſions which relate to the final judgment of the world; and ſo connected, as to lead an ordinary reader to expect, that theſe two events would not be far diſtant from each other. To which I anſwer, that the objection does not concern our preſent argument. If our Saviour actually foretold the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, it is ſufficient; even although we ſhould allow, that the narration of the prophecy had combined together what had been ſaid by him upon kindred ſubjects, without accurately preſerving the order, or always noticing the tranſition of the diſcourſe.

CHAP. II.

The Morality of the Gospel.

IN stating the morality of the gospel as an argument of its truth, I am willing to admit two points, first, that the teaching of morality was not the primary design of the mission; secondly, that morality, neither in the gospel, nor in any other book, can be a subject, properly speaking, of discovery.

If I were to describe in a very few words the scope of Christianity, as a *revelation*,[a] I should say, that it was to influence the conduct of human life, by establishing the proof of a future state of reward and punishment—"to bring life and immortality to light." The direct object, therefore, of the design is to supply motives and not rules, sanctions and not precepts. And these were what mankind stood most in need of. The members of civilized society can, in all ordinary cases, judge tolerably well how they ought to act; but without a future state, or, which is the same thing, without credited evidence of that state, they want a *motive* to their duty; they want at least strength of motive sufficient to bear up against the force of passion, and the temptation of the present advantage. Their rules want authority. The most important service that can be rendered to human life, and that, consequently, which, one might expect beforehand would be the great end and office of a revelation from God, is to convey to the world authorised assurances of the reality of a future existence. And although, in doing this, or by the ministry of the same person by which this is done, moral precepts or examples, or illustrations of moral precepts may be occasionally given, and be highly valuable, yet still they do not form the original purpose of the mission.

Secondly, morality, neither in the gospel, nor in any other book, can be a subject of discovery, properly so called. By which proposition, I mean that there cannot, in morality, be any thing similar to what are called discoveries in natural philosophy, in the arts of life, and in some sciences; as the system

[a] Great, and inestimably beneficial purposes, may be attained by Christ's mission, and especially by his death, which do not belong to Christianity as a *revelation*, that is, they might have existed, and they might have been accomplished, though we had never, in this life, have been made acquainted with them.

of the univerſe, the circulation of the blood, the polarity of the magnet, the laws of gravitation, alphabetical writing, decimal arithmetic, and ſome other things of the ſame ſort; facts, or proofs, or contrivances, before totally unknown and unthought of. Whoever therefore expects, in reading the New Teſtament, to be ſtruck with diſcoveries in morals, in the manner in which his mind was affected, when he firſt came to the knowledge of the diſcoveries above-mentioned; or rather in the manner in which the world was affected by them, when they were firſt publiſhed; expects what, as I apprehend, the nature of the ſubject renders it impoſſible he ſhould meet with. And the foundation of my opinion is this, that the qualities of actions depend entirely upon their effects, which effects muſt all along have been the ſubject of human experience.

When it is once ſettled, no matter upon what principle, that to do good is virtue, the reſt is calculation. But ſince the calculation cannot be inſtituted concerning each particular action, we eſtabliſh intermediate rules: by which proceeding the buſineſs of morality is much facilitated, for then, it is concerning our rules alone that we need inquire, whether in their tendency they be beneficial; concerning our actions we have only to aſk, whether they be agreeable to the rules. We refer actions to rules, and rules to public happineſs. Now in the formation of theſe rules, there is no place for diſcovery properly ſo called, but there is ample room for the exerciſe of wiſdom, judgment, and prudence.

As I wiſh to deliver argument rather than panegyric, I ſhall treat of the morality of the goſpel, in ſubjection to theſe obſervations. And after all, I think it ſuch a morality, as, conſidering from whom it came, is moſt extraordinary; and ſuch, as, without allowing ſome degree of reality to the character and pretenſions of the religion, it is difficult to account for; or to place the argument ſomewhat lower in the ſcale, it is ſuch a morality, as completely repels the ſuppoſition of its being the tradition of a barbarous age or of a barbarous people, of the religion being founded in folly, or of its being the production of craft; and it repels alſo, in a great degree, the ſuppoſition of its having been the effuſion of an enthuſiaſtic mind.

The diviſion, under which the ſubject may be moſt conveniently treated of, is that of the things taught, and the manner of teaching.

Under the first head, I should willingly, if the limits and nature of my work admitted of it, transcribe into this chapter the whole of what has been said upon the morality of the gospel, by the author of *the internal evidence of Christianity;* because it perfectly agrees with my own opinion, and because it is impossible to say the same things so well. This acute observer of human nature, and, as I believe, sincere convert to Christianity, appears to me to have made out satisfactorily the two following positions, viz.

I. That the gospel omits some qualities, which have usually engaged the praises and admiration of mankind, but which, in reality, and in their general effects, have been prejudicial to human happiness.

II. That the gospel has brought forward some virtues, which possess the highest intrinsic value, but which have commonly been overlooked and contemned.

The first of these propositions he exemplifies, in the instances of friendship, patriotism, active courage; in the sense in which these qualities are usually understood, and in the conduct which they often produce.

The second, in the instances of passive courage or endurance of sufferings, patience under affronts and injuries, humility, irresistance, placability.

The truth is, there are two opposite descriptions of character, under which mankind may generally be classed. The one possesses vigour, firmness, resolution, is daring and active, quick in its sensibilities, jealous of its fame, eager in its attachments, inflexible in its purpose, violent in its resentments.

The other, meek, yielding, complying, forgiving; not prompt to act but willing to suffer, silent and gentle under rudeness and insult, suing for reconciliation where others would demand satisfaction, giving way to the pushes of impudence, conceding and indulgent to the prejudices, the wrong-headedness, the intractability of those with whom it has to deal.

The former of these characters is, and ever hath been, the favourite of the world. It is the character of great men. There is a dignity in it which universally commands respect.

The latter is poor-spirited, tame, and abject. Yet so it hath happened, that, with the founder of Christianity, this latter is the subject of his commendation, his precepts, his example; and that the former is so, in no part of its composition. This,

and nothing elſe, is the character deſigned in the following remarkable paſſage: "Reſiſt not evil; but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo; and if any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo; and whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain; love your enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe and perſecute you." This certainly is not common-place morality. It is very original. It ſhows at leaſt (and it is for this purpoſe we produce it) that no two things can be more different than the heroic and the Chriſtian character.

Now the author, to whom I refer, has not only remarked this difference more ſtrongly than any preceding writer, but has proved, in contradiction to firſt impreſſions, to popular opinion, to the encomiums of orators and poets, and even to the ſuffrages of hiſtorians and moraliſts, that the latter character poſſeſſes the moſt of true worth, both as being moſt difficult either to be acquired or ſuſtained, and as contributing moſt to the happineſs and tranquillity of ſocial life. The ſtate of his argument is as follows:

I. If this diſpoſition were univerſal, the caſe is clear: the world would be a ſociety of friends. Whereas, if the other diſpoſition were univerſal, it would produce a ſcene of univerſal contention. The world could not hold a generation of ſuch men.

II. If, what is the fact, the diſpoſition be partial; if a few be actuated by it, amongſt a multitude who are not, in whatever degree it does prevail, in the ſame proportion it prevents, allays, and terminates quarrels, the great diſturbers of human happineſs, and the great ſources of human miſery, ſo far as man's happineſs and miſery depend upon man. Without this diſpoſition enmities muſt not only be frequent, but, once begun, muſt be eternal; for each retaliation being a freſh injury, and, conſequently, requiring a freſh *ſatisfaction*, no period can be aſſigned to the reciprocation of affronts, and to the progreſs of hatred, but that which cloſes the lives, or at leaſt the intercourſe, of the parties.

I would only add to theſe obſervations, that although the former of the two characters above deſcribed may be occaſionally uſeful, although, perhaps, a great general, or a great ſtateſman, may be formed, and theſe may be inſtruments of impor-

tant benefits to mankind, yet is this nothing more than what is true of many qualities, which are acknowledged to be vicious. *Envy* is a quality of this sort. I know not a stronger stimulus to exertion. Many a scholar, many an artist, many a soldier, has been produced by it. Nevertheless, since in its general effects it is noxious, it is properly condemned, certainly is not praised, by sober moralists.

It was a portion of the same character as that we are defending, or rather of his love of the same character, which our Saviour displayed, in his repeated correction of the ambition of his disciples; his frequent admonitions, that greatness with them was to consist in humility; his censure of that love of distinction, and greediness of superiority, which the chief persons amongst his countrymen were wont, on all occasions, great and little, to betray. "They (the scribes and pharisees) love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren; and call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven; neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ; but he that is greatest among *you* shall be your servant, and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."[a] I make no farther remark upon these passages (because they are, in truth, only a repetition of the doctrine, different expressions of the principle, which we have already stated) except that some of the passages, especially our Lord's advice to the guests at an entertainment, (Luke xiv. 7.) seem to extend the rule to what we call *manners*; which was, both regular in point of consistency, and not so much beneath the dignity of our Lord's mission as may at first sight be supposed, for bad manners are bad morals.

It is sufficiently apparent, that the precepts we have recited, or rather the disposition which these precepts inculcate, relate to personal conduct from personal motives; to cases in which men act from impulse, for themselves, and from themselves. When it comes to be considered, what is necessary to be done for the sake of the public, and out of a regard to the general welfare (which consideration, for the most part, ought exclusively to govern the duties of men in public stations) it comes

[a] Mat. xxiii. 6. See also Mark xii. 39. Luke xx. 43. xiv. 7.

to a case to which the rules do not belong. This distinction is plain; and, if it were less so, the consequence would not be much felt, for, it is very seldom that, in the intercourse of private life, men act with public views. The personal motives, from which they do act, the rule regulates.

The preference of the patient to the heroic character which we have here noticed, and which the reader will find explained at large in the work to which we have referred him, is a peculiarity in the Christian institution, which I propose as an argument of wisdom, very much beyond the situation and natural character of the person who delivered it.

II. A *second* argument, drawn from the morality of the New Testament, is the stress which is laid by our Saviour upon the regulation of the thoughts. And I place this consideration next to the other, because they are connected. The other related to the malicious passions, this to the voluptuous. Together they comprehend the whole character.

"Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, &c.—These are the things which defile a man." Mat. xx. 19.

"Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but *within* they are full of extortion and excess.—Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness; even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Mat xxiii. 25, 27.

And more particularly that strong expression, (Mat. v. 28) "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart."

There can be no doubt with any reflecting mind, but that the propensities of our nature must be subjected to regulation; but the question is, where the check ought to be placed, upon the thought, or only upon action. In this question our Saviour, in the texts here quoted, has pronounced a decisive judgment. He makes the control of thought essential. Internal purity with him is every thing. Now I contend that this is the only discipline which can succeed; in other words, that a moral system, which prohibits actions, but leaves the thoughts at liberty, will be ineffectual, and is therefore unwise. I know not how to go about the proof of a point, which depends upon experience, and upon a knowledge of the human constitution, better

than by citing the judgment of perſons, who appear to have given great attention to the ſubject, and to be well qualified to form a true opinion about it. Boerhaave, ſpeaking of this very declaration of our Saviour, "whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart," and underſtanding it, as we do, to contain an injunction to lay the check upon the thoughts, was wont to ſay, that "our Saviour knew mankind better than Socrates." Haller, who has recorded this ſaying of Boerhaave's, adds to it the following remark of his own:[a] "It did not eſcape the obſervation of our Saviour, that the rejection of any evil thoughts was the beſt defence againſt vice; for, when a debauched perſon fills his imagination with impure pictures, the licentious ideas which he recals, fail not to ſtimulate his deſires with a degree of violence which he cannot reſiſt. This will be followed by gratification, unleſs ſome external obſtacle ſhould prevent him from the commiſſion of a ſin, which he had internally reſolved on." "Every moment of time (ſays our author) that is ſpent in meditations upon ſin, increaſes the power of the dangerous object which has poſſeſſed our imagination." I ſuppoſe theſe reflections will be generally aſſented to.

III. Thirdly, had a teacher of morality been aſked concerning a general principle of conduct, and for a ſhort rule of life; and had he inſtructed the perſon who conſulted him, "conſtantly to refer his actions to what he believed to be the will of his Creator, and conſtantly to have in view, not his own intereſt and gratification alone, but the happineſs and comfort of thoſe about him," he would have been thought, I doubt not, in any age of the world, and in any, even the moſt improved ſtate of morals, to have delivered a judicious anſwer; becauſe, by the firſt direction, he ſuggeſted the only motive which acts ſteadily and uniformly, in ſight and out of ſight, in familiar occurrences and under preſſing temptations; and, in the ſecond, he corrected, what, of all tendencies in the human character, ſtands moſt in need of correction, *ſelfiſhneſs*, a contempt of other men's conveniency and ſatisfaction. In eſtimating the value of a moral rule, we are to have regard, not only to the particular duty, but the general ſpirit; not only to what it directs us to do, but to the

[a] Letters to his daughter.

character which a compliance with its direction is likely to form in us. So, in the present instance, the rule here recited will never fail to make him who obeys it, *consider ate*, not only of the rights, but of the feelings of other men, bodily and mental, in great matters and in small, of the ease, the accommodation, the self-complacency of all with whom he has any concern, especially of all who are in his power, or dependent upon his will.

Now what, in the most applauded philosopher of the most enlightened age of the world, would have been deemed worthy of his wisdom, and of his character, to say, our Saviour hath said, and upon just such an occasion as that which we have feigned.

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law. Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Mat. xxii. 35—40.

The second precept occurs in St. Matthew, on another occasion similar to this, (xix. 16) and both of them upon a third similar occasion in Luke (x. 27.) In these two latter instances, the question proposed was, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Upon all these occasions, I consider the words of our Saviour as expressing precisely the same thing as what I have put into the mouth of the moral philosopher. Nor do I think that it detracts much from the merit of the answer, that these precepts are extant in the Mosaic code; for his laying his finger, if I may so say, upon these precepts; his drawing them out from the rest of that voluminous institution; his stating of them, not simply amongst the number, but as the greatest and the sum of all the others; in a word, his proposing of them to his hearers for their rule and principle, was our Saviour's own.

And what our Saviour had said upon the subject, appears to me to have *fixed* the sentiment amongst his followers.

St. Paul has it expressly, "if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;"[a] and again, "for all the law is ful-

[a] Rom. xiii. 7.

filled in one word, even this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[a]

St. John, in like manner, "this commandment have we from him that he who loveth God, love his brother also."[b]

St. Peter, not very differently, "seeing that ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."[c]

And it is so well known, as to require no citations to verify it, that this love, or charity, or, in other words, regard to the welfare of others, runs in various forms through all the preceptive parts of the apostolic writings. It is the theme of all their exhortations, that with which their morality begins and ends, from which all their details and enumerations set out, and into which they return.

And that this temper, for some time at least, descended in its purity to succeeding Christians, is attested by one of the earliest and best of the remaining writings of the apostolical fathers, the epistle of the Roman Clement. The meekness of the Christian character reigns throughout the whole of that excellent piece. The occasion called for it. It was to compose the dissensions of the church of Corinth. And the venerable hearer of the apostles does not fall short, in the display of this principle, of the finest passages of their writings. He calls to the remembrance of the Corinthian church its former character, in which "ye were all of you (he tells them) humble minded, not boasting of any thing, desiring rather to be subject than to govern, to give than to receive, being content with the portion God had dispensed to you, and hearkening diligently to his word, ye were enlarged in your bowels, having his sufferings always before your eyes. Ye contended day and night for the whole brotherhood, that with compassion and a good conscience the number of his elect might be saved. Ye were sincere, and without offence, towards each other. Ye bewailed every one his neighbour's sins, esteeming their defects as your own."[d] His prayer for them was for the "return of peace, long-suffering, and patience."[e] And his advice to those, who might have been the occasion of difference in the society, is conceived in the true spirit, and with a perfect knowledge of the Christian character. "Who is

[a] Gal. v. 14. [b] 1 John iv. 21. [c] 1 Pet. i. 22.

[d] Ep. Clem. Rom. c. 2, A. B. Wake's Translation. [e] Ib. c. 58.

there among you that is generous? Who that is compaſſionate? Who that has any charity? Let him ſay, if this ſedition, this contention, and theſe ſchiſms, be upon my account, I am ready to depart, to go away whitherſoever ye pleaſe, and do whatſoever ye ſhall command me, only let the flock of Chriſt be in peace, with the elders who are ſet over it. He that ſhall do this, ſhall get to himſelf a very great honour in the Lord; and there is no place but what will be ready to receive him, for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof. Theſe things they, who have their converſation towards God, not to be repented of, both have done, and will be always ready to do."[a]

This ſacred principle, this earneſt recommendation of forbearance, lenity, and forgiveneſs, mixes with all the writings of that age. There are more quotations in the apoſtolical fathers of texts which relate to theſe points, than of any other. Chriſt's ſayings had ſtruck them. "Not rendering (ſaith Polycarp, the diſciple of John) evil for evil, or railing for railing, or ſtriking for ſtriking, or curſing for curſing."[b] Again, ſpeaking of ſome whoſe behaviour had given great offence, "be ye moderate (ſays he) upon this occaſion, and look not upon ſuch as enemies, but call them back as ſuffering and erring members, that ye ſave your whole body."[c]

"Be ye mild at their anger, (ſaith Ignatius, the companion of Polycarp) humble at their boaſtings, to their blaſphemies return your prayers, to their error your firmneſs in the faith; when they are cruel, be ye gentle; not endeavouring to imitate their ways, let us be their brethren in all kindneſs and moderation, but let us be followers of the Lord, for who was ever more unjuſtly uſed, more deſtitute, more deſpiſed?"

IV. A fourth quality, by which the morality of the goſpel is diſtinguiſhed, is the excluſion of regard to fame and reputation.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be ſeen of them, otherwiſe ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."[d]

"When thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret; and thy Father, which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly."[e]

And the rule by parity of reaſon is extended to all other virtues.

[a] Ib. c. 54. [b] Pol. Ep. ad. Phil. c. 2. [c] Ib. c. 11.
[d] Mat. vi. 1. [e] Mat. vi. 6.

I do not think, that either in these, or in any other passage of the New Testament, the pursuit of fame is stated as a vice; it is only said that an action, to be virtuous, must be independent of it. I would also observe, that it is not publicity, but ostentation, which is prohibited; not the mode, but the motive of the action, which is regulated. A good man will prefer that mode, as well as those objects of his beneficence, by which he can produce the greatest effect; and the view of this purpose may dictate sometimes publication, and sometimes concealment. Either the one or the other may be the *mode* of the action, according as the end to be promoted by it appears to require. But from the *motive*, the reputation of the deed, and the fruits and advantage of that reputation to ourselves, must be shut out, or, in whatever proportion they are not so, the action in that proportion fails of being virtuous.

This exclusion of regard to human opinion, is a difference, not so much in the duties, to which the teachers of virtue would persuade mankind, as in the manner and topics of persuasion. And in this view the difference is great. When *we* set about to give advice, our lectures are full of the advantages of character, of the regard that is due to appearances and to opinion; of what the world, especially of what the good or great, will think and say; of the value of public esteem, and of the qualities by which men acquire it. Widely different from this was our Saviour's instruction: and the difference was founded upon the best reasons. For, however the care of reputation, the authority of public opinion, or even of the opinion of good men, the satisfaction of being well received and well thought of, the benefit of being known and distinguished, are topics, to which we are fain to have recourse in our exhortations, the true virtue is that which discards these considerations absolutely; and which retires from them all to the single internal purpose of pleasing God. This at least was the virtue which our Saviour taught. And in teaching of this, he not only confined the views of his followers to the proper measure and principle of human duty, but acted in consistency with his office as a monitor from heaven.

Next to what our Saviour taught, may be considered the manner of his teaching; which was extremely peculiar, yet, I think, precisely adapted to the peculiarity of his character and situation. His lessons did not consist of disquisitions; of anything like moral essays, or like sermons, or like set treatises upon

the ſeveral points which he mentioned. When he delivered a precept, it was ſeldom that he added any proof or argument; ſtill ſeldomer, that he accompanied it with, what all precepts require, limitations and diſtinctions. His inſtructions were conceived in ſhort emphatic rules, in occaſional reflections, or in round maxims. I do not think that this was a natural, or would have been a proper method, for a philoſopher or a moraliſt; or that it is a method which can be ſucceſsfully imitated by us. But I contend that it was ſuitable to the character which Chriſt aſſumed, and to the ſituation in which, as a teacher, he was placed. He produced himſelf as a meſſenger from God. He put the truth of what he taught upon authority. In the choice, therefore, of his mode of teaching, the purpoſe by him to be conſulted was *impreſſion*; becauſe conviction, which forms the principal end of our diſcourſes, was to ariſe in the minds of his followers from a different ſource, from their reſpect to his perſon and authority. Now, for the purpoſe of impreſſion ſingly and excluſively (I repeat again, that we are not here to conſider the convincing of the underſtanding) I know nothing which would have ſo great force, as ſtrong ponderous maxims, frequently urged, and frequently brought back to the thoughts of the hearers. I know nothing that could in this view be ſaid better, than "do unto others, as ye would that others ſhould do unto you; the firſt and great commandment is, thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God; and the ſecond is like unto it, thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf." It muſt alſo be remembered, that our Lord's miniſtry, upon the ſuppoſition either of one year or three, compared with his work, was of ſhort duration; that, within this time, he had many places to viſit, various audiences to addreſs; that his perſon was generally beſieged by crowds of followers; that he was, ſometimes, driven away from the place where he was teaching by perſecution, and, at other times, thought fit to withdraw himſelf from the commotions of the populace. Under theſe circumſtances, nothing appears to have been ſo practicable, or likely to be efficacious, as leaving, wherever he came, conciſe leſſons of duty. Theſe circumſtances at leaſt ſhow the neceſſity he was under of compriſing what he delivered in a ſmall compaſs. In particular, his ſermon upon the mount ought always to be conſidered with a view to theſe obſervations. The queſtion is not, whether a fuller, a more accurate, a more ſyſtematic, or a more argumentative diſcourſe upon morals might not have been pronounc-

ed, but whether more could have been said in the same room, better adapted to the exigencies of the hearers, or better calculated for the purpose of impression. Seen in this light, it hath always appeared to me to be admirable. Dr. Lardner thought that this discourse was made up of what Christ had said at different times, and upon different occasions, several of which occasions are noticed in St. Luke's narrative. I can conceive no reason for this opinion. I believe that our Lord delivered this discourse at one time and place, in the manner related by St. Matthew, that he repeated the same rules and maxims at different times, as opportunity or occasion suggested; that they were often in his mouth, were repeated to different audiences, and in various conversations.

It is incidental to this mode of moral instruction, which proceeds not by proof but upon authority, not by disquisition but by precept, that the rules will be conceived in absolute terms, leaving the application, and the distinctions that attend it, to the reason of the hearer. It is likewise to be expected, that they will be delivered in terms, by so much the more forcible and energetic, as they have to encounter natural or general propensities. It is further also to be remarked, that many of those strong instances which appear in our Lord's sermon, such as "if any man will smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain;" though they appear in the form of specific precepts, are intended as descriptive of disposition and character. A specific compliance with the precepts would be of little value, but the disposition which they inculcate is of the highest. He who should content himself with waiting for the occasion, and with literally observing the rule when the occasion offered, would do nothing, or worse than nothing; but he who considers the character and disposition which is hereby inculcated, and places that disposition before him as the model to which he should bring his own, takes, perhaps, the best possible method of improving the benevolence, and of calming and rectifying the vices of his temper. If it be said that this disposition is unattainable, I answer, so is all perfection; ought therefore a moralist to recommend imperfections? One excellency, however, of our Saviour's rules is, that they are either never mistaken, or never so mistaken as to do harm. I could feign a hundred cases, in which, the literal application of the rule, "of doing to

others as we would that others ſhould do unto us," might miſlead us; but I never yet met with the man who was actually miſled by it. Notwithſtanding that our Lord bid his followers, "not to reſiſt evil," and "to forgive the enemy, who ſhould treſpaſs againſt them, not till ſeven times but till ſeventy times ſeven," the Chriſtian has hitherto ſuffered little by too much placability or forbearance. I would repeat once more, what has already been twice remarked, that theſe rules were deſigned to regulate perſonal conduct from perſonal motives, and for this purpoſe alone.

I think that theſe obſervations will aſſiſt us greatly in placing our Saviour's conduct, as a moral teacher, in a proper point of view; eſpecially when it is conſidered, that to deliver moral diſquiſitions was no part of his deſign, to teach morality at all was only a ſubordinate part of it, his great buſineſs being to ſupply, what was much more wanting than the leſſons of morality, ſtronger moral ſanctions, and clearer aſſurances of a future judgment.[a]

The *parables* of the New Teſtament are, many of them, ſuch as would have done honour to any book in the world, I do not mean in ſtyle and diction, but in the choice of the ſubjects, in the ſtructure of the narratives, in the aptneſs, propriety, and force of the circumſtances woven into them; and in ſome, as that of the good Samaritan, the prodigal ſon, the phariſee and the publican, in an union of pathos and ſimplicity, which, in the beſt productions of human genius, is the fruit only of a much exerciſed and well cultivated judgment.

The Lord's prayer, for a ſucceſſion of ſolemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for ſuitableneſs to

[a] Some appear to require in a religious ſyſtem, or in the books which profeſs to deliver that ſyſtem, minute directions for every caſe and occurrence that may ariſe. This, ſay they, is neceſſary to render a revelation perfect, eſpecially one which has for its object the regulation of human conduct. Now, how prolix, and yet how incomplete and unavailing, ſuch an attempt muſt have been, is proved by one notable example: "The Indoo and Muſſulman religion are inſtitutes of civil law, regulating the minuteſt queſtions both of property, and of all queſtions which come under the cognizance of the magiſtrate. And to what length details of this kind are neceſſarily carried, when once begun, may be underſtood from an anecdote of the Muſſulman code, which we have received from the moſt reſpectable authority, that not leſs than *ſeventy-five thouſand* traditional precepts have been promulgated." Hamilton's tranſlation of the Hedaya, or Guide.

every condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival.

From whence did these come? Whence had this man this wisdom? Was our Saviour, in fact, a well instructed philosopher, whilst he is represented to us as an illiterate peasant? Or shall we say that some early Christians of taste and education composed these pieces, and ascribed them to Christ? Beside all other incredibilities in this account, I answer, with Dr. Jortin, that they could not do it. No specimens of composition, which the Christians of the first century have left us, authorize us to believe that they were equal to the task. And how little qualified the Jews, the countrymen and companions of Christ, were to assist him in the undertaking, may be judged of from the traditions and writings of theirs which were the nearest to that age. The whole collection of the Talmud is one continued proof into what follies they fell whenever they left their Bible; and how little capable they were of furnishing out such lessons as Christ delivered.

But there is still another view, in which our Lord's discourses deserve to be considered; and that is, in their *negative* character, not in what they did, but in what they did not contain. Under this head, the following reflections appear to me to possess some weight.

I. They exhibit no particular description of the invisible world. The future happiness of the good, and the misery of the bad, which is all we want to be assured of, is directly and positively affirmed, and is represented by metaphors and comparisons, which were plainly intended as metaphors and comparisons, and as nothing more. As to the rest, a solemn reserve is maintained. The question concerning the woman who had been married to seven brothers, "whose shall she be on the resurrection?" was of a nature calculated to have drawn from Christ a more circumstantial account of the state of the human species in their future existence. He cut short, however, the inquiry by an answer, which at once rebuked vain and intruding curiosity, and was agreeable to the best apprehensions we are able to form upon the subject, viz. "that they who are accounted worthy of that resurrection, shall be as the angels of God in heaven." I lay a stress upon this reserve, because it repels the suspicion of enthusiasm; for enthusiasm is wont to expatiate upon the condition of the departed, above all other subjects; and

with a wild particularity. It is moreover a topic which is always liſtened to with greedineſs. The teacher, therefore, whoſe principal purpoſe is to draw upon himſelf attention, is ſure to be full of it. The Koran of Mahomet is half made up of it.

II. Our Lord enjoined no auſterities. He not only enjoined none as abſolute duties, but he recommended none as carrying men to a higher degree of divine favour. Place Chriſtianity, in this reſpect, by the ſide of all inſtitutions which have been founded in the fanaticiſm, either of their author, or of his firſt followers; or rather compare in this reſpect, Chriſtianity as it came from Chriſt, with the ſame religion after it fell into other hands; with the extravagant merit very ſoon aſcribed to celibacy, ſolitude, voluntary poverty; with the rigours of an aſcetic, and the vows of a monaſtic life, the hair ſhirt, the watchings, the midnight prayers, the obmuteſcence, the gloom and mortification of religious orders, and of thoſe who aſpired to religious perfection.

III. Our Saviour uttered no impaſſioned devotion. There was no heat in his piety, or in the language in which he expreſſed it; no vehement or rapturous ejaculations; no violent urgency in his prayers. The Lord's prayer is a model of calm devotion. His words in the garden are unaffected expreſſions, of a deep indeed, but ſober piety. He never appears to have been worked up into any thing like that elation, or that emotion of ſpirits, which is occaſionally obſerved in moſt of thoſe, to whom the name of enthuſiaſt can in any degree be applied. I feel a reſpect for Methodiſts, becauſe I believe that there is to be found amongſt them much ſincere piety, and availing, though not always well-informed Chriſtianity; yet I never attended a meeting of theirs, but I came away with the reflection, how different what I heard was from what I read; I do not mean in doctrine, with which, at preſent, I have no concern, but in manner; how different from the calmneſs, the ſobriety, the good ſenſe, and, I may add, the ſtrength and authority of our Lord's diſcourſes.

IV. It is very uſual with the human mind, to ſubſtitute forwardneſs and fervency in a particular cauſe, for the merit of general and regular morality; and it is natural, and politic alſo, in the leader of a ſect or party, to encourage ſuch a diſpoſition in his followers. Chriſt did not overlook this turn of thought; yet, though avowedly placing himſelf at the head of a new inſtitution, he notices it only to condemn it. "Not every one that

faith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven: Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto you, I never knew you, depart from me, *ye that work iniquity.*"[a] So far was the Author of Christianity from courting the attachment of his followers by any sacrifice of principle, or by a condescension to the errors which even zeal in his service might have inspired. This was a proof both of sincerity and judgment.

V. Nor, fifthly, did he fall in with any of the depraved fashions of his country, or with the natural bias of his own education. Bred up a Jew, under a religion extremely technical, in an age and amongst a people more tenacious of the ceremonies than of any other part of that religion, he delivered an institution containing less of ritual, and that more simple, than is to be found in any religion, which ever prevailed amongst mankind. We have known, I do allow, examples of an enthusiasm, which has swept away all external ordinances before it. But this spirit certainly did not dictate our Saviour's conduct, either in his treatment of the religion of his country, or in the formation of his own institution. In both he displayed the soundness and moderation of his judgment. He censured an overstrained scrupulousness, or perhaps an affectation of scrupulousness, about the Sabbath; but how did he censure it? not by contemning or decrying the institution itself, but by declaring that, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath;" that is to say, that the Sabbath was to be subordinate to its purpose, and that that purpose was the real good of those who were the subjects of the law. The same concerning the nicety of some of the Pharisees, in paying tythes of the most trifling articles, accompanied with a neglect of justice, fidelity, and mercy. He finds fault with them for misplacing their anxiety. He does not speak disrespectfully of the law of tythes, or of their observance of it, but he assigns to such class of duties its proper station in the scale of moral importance. All this might be expected perhaps from a well-instructed, cool, and judicious philosopher, but was not to be looked for from an illiterate Jew, certainly not from an impetuous enthusiast.

[a] Mat. vii. 21, 22.

VI. Nothing could be more quibbling, than were the comments and expoſitions of the Jewiſh doctors, at that time; nothing ſo puerile as their diſtinctions. Their evaſion of the fifth commandment, their expoſition of the law of oaths, are ſpecimens of the bad taſte in morals which then prevailed. Whereas in a numerous collection of our Saviour's apothegms, many of them referring to ſundry precepts of the Jewiſh law, there is not to be found one example of ſophiſtry, or of falſe ſubtlety, or of any thing approaching thereto.

VII. The national temper of the Jews was intolerant, narrow-minded, and excluding. In Jeſus, on the contrary, whether we regard his leſſons or his example, we ſee not only benevolence, but benevolence the moſt enlarged and comprehenſive. In the parable of the good Samaritan, the very point of the ſtory is, that the perſon relieved by him, was the national and religious enemy of his benefactor. Our Lord declared the equity of the divine adminiſtration, when he told the Jews (what, probably, they were ſurpriſed to hear) "that many ſhould come from the eaſt and weſt, and ſhould ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but that the children of the kingdom ſhould be caſt into outer darkneſs." [a] His reproof of the haſty zeal of his diſciples, who would needs call down fire from heaven to revenge an affront put upon their Maſter, ſhows the lenity of his character, and of his religion; and his opinion of the manner in which the moſt unreaſonable opponents ought to be treated, or at leaſt of the manner in which they ought not to be treated. The terms, in which his rebuke was conveyed, deſerve to be noticed:—"Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of." [b]

VIII. Laſtly, amongſt the negative qualities of our religion, as it came out of the hands of its Founder and his apoſtles, we may reckon its complete abſtraction from all views either of eccleſiaſtical or civil policy; or, to meet a language much in faſhion with ſome men, from the politics either of prieſts or ſtateſmen. Chriſt's declaration, that "his kingdom was not of this world," recorded by John; his evaſion of the queſtion, whether it was lawful or not to give tribute unto Cæſar, mentioned by the three other evangeliſts; his reply to an application that was made to him, to interpoſe his authority in a queſtion of property, "Man, who made me a ruler or a judge over you?" aſcribed

[a] Mat. viii. 11. [b] Luke ix. 55.

to him by St. Luke; his declining to exercise the office of a criminal judge in the case of the woman taken in adultery, as related by John, are all intelligible significations of our Saviour's sentiments upon this head. And with respect to *politics*, in the usual sense of that word, or discussions concerning different forms of government, Christianity declines every question upon the subject. Whilst politicians are disputing about monarchies, aristocracies, and republics, Christianity is alike applicable, useful, and friendly to them all; inasmuch as, 1st, it tends to make men virtuous, and as it is easier to govern good men than bad men under any constitution: as, 2dly, it states obedience to government in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience: as, 3dly, it induces dispositions favourable to public tranquillity, a Christian's chief care being, to pass quietly through this world to a better: as, 4thly, it prays for communities, and for the governors of communities, of whatever description or denomination they be, with a solicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence which they possess upon human happiness. All which, in my opinion, is just as it should be. Had there been more to be found in scripture of a political nature, or convertible to political purposes, the worst use would have been made of it, on whichever side it seemed to lie.

When, therefore, we consider Christ as a moral teacher (remembering that this was only a secondary part of his office; and that morality, by the nature of the subject, does not admit of discovery, properly so called) when we consider, either what he taught, or what he did not teach, either the substance or the manner of his instruction; his preference of solid to popular virtues, of a character which is commonly despised, to a character which is universally extolled; his placing, in our licentious vices, the check in the right place, viz. upon the thoughts; his collecting of human duty into two well-devised rules, his repetition of these rules, the stress he laid upon them, especially in comparison with positive duties, and his fixing thereby the sentiments of his followers; his exclusion of all regard to reputation in our devotion and alms, and, by parity of reason, in our other virtues; when we consider that his instructions were delivered in a form calculated for impression, the precise purpose in his situation to be consulted; and that they were illustrated by parables, the choice and structure of which would have been admired in any composition whatever; when

we obſerve him free from the uſual ſymptoms of enthuſiaſm, heat and vehemence in devotion, auſterity in inſtitutions, and a wild particularity in the deſcriptions of a future ſtate; free alſo from the depravities of his age and country, without ſuperſtition amongſt the moſt ſuperſtitious of men, yet not decrying poſitive diſtinctions or external obſervances, but ſoberly recalling them to the principle of their eſtabliſhment, and to their place in the ſcale of human duties; without ſophiſtry or trifling, amidſt teachers remarkable for nothing ſo much as frivolous ſubtleties and quibbling expoſitions; candid and liberal in his judgment of the reſt of mankind, although belonging to a people, who affected a ſeparate claim to divine favour, and, in conſequence of that opinion, prone to uncharitableneſs, partiality and reſtriction; when we find in his religion, no ſcheme of building up a hierarchy, or of miniſtering to the views of human governments: in a word, when we compare Chriſtianity, as it came from its Author, either with other religions, or with itſelf in other hands, the moſt reluctant underſtanding will be induced to acknowledge the probity, I think alſo, the good ſenſe of thoſe, to whom it owes its origin; and that ſome regard is due to the teſtimony of ſuch men, when they declare their knowledge that the religion proceeded from God; and when they appeal, for the truth of their aſſertion, to miracles which they wrought, or which they ſaw.

Perhaps the qualities which we obſerve in the religion, may be thought to prove ſomething more. They would have been extraordinary, had the religion come from any perſon; from the perſon, from whom it did come, they are exceedingly ſo. What was Jeſus in external appearance? a Jewiſh peaſant, the ſon of a carpenter, living with his father and mother in a remote province of Paleſtine, until the time that he produced himſelf in his public character. He had no maſter to inſtruct or prompt him. He had read no books, but the works of Moſes and the prophets. He had viſited no poliſhed cities. He had received no leſſons from Socrates or Plato; nothing to form in him a taſte or judgment, different from that of the reſt of his countrymen, and of perſons of the ſame rank of life with himſelf. Suppoſing it to be true, which it is not, that all his points of morality might be picked out of the Greek and Roman writings, they were writings which *he* had never ſeen. Suppoſing them to be no more than what ſome or other had taught in various times and places, he could not collect them together.

Who were his coadjutors in the undertaking, the persons into whose hands the religion came after his death? a few fishermen upon the lake of Tiberias, persons just as uneducated, and for the purpose of framing rules of morality, as unpromising as himself. Suppose the mission to be real, all this is accounted for; the unsuitableness of the authors to the production, of the characters to the undertaking, no longer surprises us; but without *reality*, it is very difficult to explain how such a system should proceed from such persons. Christ was not like any other carpenter; the apostles were not like any other fishermen.

But the subject is not exhausted by these observations. That portion of it, which is most reducible to points of argument, has been stated, and I trust truly. There are, however, some topics, of a more diffuse nature, which yet deserve to be proposed to the reader's attention.

The character of Christ is a part of the morality of the gospel; one strong observation upon which is, that, neither as represented by his followers, nor as attacked by his enemies, is he charged with any personal vice. This remark is as old as Origen:—"Though innumerable lies and calumnies had been forged against the venerable Jesus, none had dared to charge him with any intemperance."[a] Not a reflection upon his moral character, not an imputation or suspicion of any offence against purity and chastity, appears for five hundred years after his birth. This faultlessness is more peculiar than we are apt to imagine. Some stain pollutes the morals or the morality of almost every other teacher, and of every other law-giver.[b] Zeno the stoic, and Diogenes the cynic, fell into the foulest impurities; of which also Socrates himself was more than suspected. Solon forbad unnatural crimes to slaves. Lycurgus tolerated theft as a part of education. Plato recommended a community of women. Aristotle maintained the general right of making war upon barbarians. The elder Cato was remarkable for the ill-usage of his slaves. The younger gave up the person of his wife. One loose principle is found in almost all the Pagan moralists; is distinctly, however, perceived in the writings of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and

[a] Or. Ep. Celf. l. 3. Num. 36. ed. Bened.

[b] See many instances collected by Grotius de Ver. in the notes to his second book, p. 116. Pocock's edition.

that is, the allowing, and even the recommending to their disciples a compliance with the religion and with the religious rites of every country into which they came. In speaking of the founders of new institutions, we cannot forget Mahomet. His licentious transgressions of his own licentious rules; his abuse of the character which he assumed, and of the power which he had acquired, for the purposes of personal and privileged indulgence; his avowed claim of a special permission from heaven of unlimited sensuality, is known to every reader, as it is confessed by every writer, of the Moslem story.

Secondly, in the histories which are left us of Jesus Christ, although very short, and although dealing in narrative, and not in observation or panegyric, we perceive, beside the absence of every appearance of vice, traces of devotion, humility, benignity, mildness, patience, prudence. I speak of *traces* of these qualities, because the qualities themselves are to be collected from incidents; inasmuch as the terms are never used of Christ in the gospels, nor is any formal character of him drawn in any part of the New Testament.

Thus we see the *devoutness* of his mind, in his frequent retirement to solitary prayer,[a] in his habitual giving of thanks,[b] in his reference of the beauties and operations of nature to the bounty of Providence;[c] in his earnest addresses to his Father, more particularly that short but solemn one before the raising of Lazarus from the dead;[d] and in the deep piety of his behaviour in the garden, on the last evening of his life;[e] his *humility*, in his constant reproof of contentions for superiority;[f] the *benignity* and affectionateness of his temper in his kindness to children;[g] in the tears which he shed over his falling country;[h] and upon the death of his friend;[i] in his noticing of the widow's mite;[k] in his parables of the good Samaritan, of the ungrateful servant, and of the pharisee and publican, of which parables no one but a man of humanity could have been the author: the *mildness* and lenity of his character is discovered, in his rebuke of the forward zeal of his disciples at the Samaritan village,[l] in his expostulation with Pilate,[m] in his prayer for his enemies at the mo-

[a] Mat. xiv. 23. ix. 28. xxvi. 36.
[b] Mat. xi. 25. Mark viii. 6. John vi. 23. Luke xxii. 18.
[c] Mat. vi. 26, 28. [d] John xi. 41. [e] Mat. xxvi.
[f] Mark ix. 33. [g] Ibid. 16. [h] Luke xix. 41. [i] John xi. 35.
[k] Mark xii. 42. [l] Luke ix. 55. [m] John xix. 11.

ment of his ſuffering,[a] which, though it has been ſince very properly and frequently imitated, was then, I apprehend, new. His *prudence* is diſcerned, where prudence is moſt wanted, in his conduct upon trying occaſions, and in anſwers to artful queſtions. Of theſe the following are examples: His withdrawing, in various inſtances, from the firſt ſymptoms of tumult,[b] and with the expreſs care, as appears from St. Matthew,[c] of conducting his miniſtry in quietneſs; his declining of every ſpecies of interference with the civil affairs of the country, which diſpoſition is manifeſted by his conduct in the caſe of the woman caught in adultery,[d] and in his repulſe of the application made to him, to interpoſe his deciſion about a diſputed inheritance;[e] his judicious, yet, as it ſhould ſeem, unprepared anſwers, will be confeſſed in the caſe of the Roman tribute,[f] in the difficulty concerning the interfering relations of a future ſtate, as propoſed to him in the inſtance of a woman who had married ſeven brethren;[g] and, more eſpecially in his reply to thoſe who demanded from him an explanation of the authority by which he acted, which reply conſiſted, in propounding a queſtion to them, ſituated between the very difficulties, into which they were inſidiouſly endeavouring to draw *him*.[h]

Our Saviour's leſſons, beſide what already has been remarked in them, touch, and that oftentimes by very affecting repreſentations, upon ſome of the moſt intereſting topics of human duty, and of human meditation; upon the principles, by which the deciſions of the laſt day will be regulated,[i] upon the ſuperior, or rather the ſupreme importance of the religion,[k] upon penitence, by the moſt preſſing calls, and the moſt encouraging invitations,[l] ſelf-denial,[m] watchfulneſs,[n] placability,[o] confidence in God,[p] the value of ſpiritual, that is, of mental worſhip,[q] the neceſſity of moral obedience, and the directing of that obedience to the ſpirit and principle of the law, inſtead of ſeeking for evaſions in a technical conſtruction of its terms.[r]

a Luke xxiii. 34. b Mat. xiv. 22. Luke v. 15, 16. John v. 13. vi. 15.
c xii. 19. d John viii. 1. e Luke xii. 14. f Mat. xxii. 19.
g Ib. 28. h xxi. 23. et ſeq. i Mat. xxv. 31. et ſeq.
k Mark viii. 35. Mat. vi. 31—33. Luke xii. 16, 21—4, 5.
l John xv. m Mat. v. 29. n Mark xiii. 37. Mat. xxiv. 42—xxv. 13.
o Luke xvii. 4. Mat. xviii. 33. p Mat. v. 23—30.
q John iv. 23, 24. r Mat. v. 11.

If we extend our argument to other parts of the New Teſtament, we may offer, as amongſt the beſt and ſhorteſt rules of life, or, which is the ſame thing, deſcriptions of virtue, that have ever been delivered, the following paſſages:

"Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world."[a]

"Now the end of the commandment is, charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conſcience, and faith unfeigned."[b]

"For the grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world."[c]

Enumerations of virtues and vices, and thoſe ſufficiently accurate, and unqueſtionably juſt, are given by St. Paul to his converts in three ſeveral epiſtles.[d]

The relative duties of huſbands and wives, of parents and children, of maſters and ſervants, of Chriſtian teachers and their flocks, of governors and their ſubjects, are ſet forth by the ſame writer,[e] not indeed with the copiouſneſs, the detail, or the diſtinctneſs, of a moraliſt, who ſhould, in theſe days, ſit down to write chapters upon the ſubject, but with the leading rules and principles in each; and, above all, with truth, and with authority.

Laſtly, the whole volume of the New Teſtament is replete with *piety*; with what were almoſt unknown to heathen moraliſts, *devotional virtues*, the moſt profound veneration of the Deity, an habitual ſenſe of his bounty and protection, a firm confidence in the final reſult of his councils and diſpenſations, a diſpoſition to reſort, upon all occaſions, to his mercy, for the ſupply of human wants, for aſſiſtance in danger, for relief from pain, for the pardon of ſin.

[a] James i. 27. [b] 1 Tim. i. 5. [c] Tit. ii. 11, 12.
[d] Gal. v. 19. Col. iii. 12. 1 Cor. xiii. [e] Eph. v. 32. vi. 1. vii. 5. 2 Cor. vi. 6, 7. Rom. xiii.

CHAP. III.

The Candour of the Writers of the New Teſtament.

I MAKE this candour to conſiſt, in their putting down many paſſages and noticing many circumſtances, which no writer whatever was likely to have forged; and which no writer would have choſen to appear in his book, who had been careful to preſent the ſtory in the moſt unexceptionable form, or who had thought himſelf at liberty to carve and mould the particulars of that ſtory, according to his choice, or according to his judgment of the effect.

A ſtrong and well-known example of the fairneſs of the evangeliſts, offers itſelf in their account of Chriſt's reſurrection, namely, in their unanimouſly ſtating, that, after he was riſen, he appeared to his diſciples alone. I do not mean, that they have uſed the excluſive word *alone;* but that all the inſtances which they have recorded of his appearance, are inſtances of appearance to his diſciples; that their reaſonings upon it, and alluſions to it, are confined to this ſuppoſition; and that, by one of them, Peter is made to ſay, "Him God raiſed up the third day, and ſhowed him openly, not to all the people, but to witneſſes choſen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he roſe from the dead." The commoneſt underſtanding muſt have perceived, that the hiſtory of the reſurrection would have come with more advantage, if they had related that Jeſus appeared, after he was riſen, to his foes as well as his friends, to the ſcribes and phariſees, the Jewiſh council, and the Roman governor; or even if they had aſſerted the public appearance of Chriſt in general unqualified terms, without noticing, as they have done, the preſence of his diſciples upon each occaſion and noticing it in ſuch a manner as to lead their readers to ſuppoſe that none but diſciples were preſent. They *could* have repreſented it one way as well as the other. And if their point had been, to have the religion believed, whether true or falſe; if they had fabricated the ſtory *ab initio*, or if they had been diſpoſed, either to have delivered their teſtimony as witneſſes, or to have worked up their materials and information as hiſtorians, and in ſuch a manner as to render their narrative as ſpecious and unobjectionable as they could; in a word, if they had thought of any thing but of the truth of the caſe, as

they underſtood and believed it; they would, in their account of Chriſt's ſeveral appearances after his reſurrection, at leaſt have omitted this reſtriction. At this diſtance of time, the account as we have it, is perhaps more credible than it would have been the other way; becauſe this manifeſtation of the hiſtorian's candour, is of more advantage to their teſtimony, than the difference in the circumſtances of the account would have been to the nature of the evidence. But this is an effect which the evangeliſts would not foreſee; and I think that it was by no means the caſe at the time when the books were compoſed.

Mr. Gibbon has argued for the genuineneſs of the Koran, from the confeſſions which it contains, to the apparent diſadvantage of the Mahometan cauſe.[a] The ſame defence vindicates the genuineneſs of our goſpels, and without prejudice to the cauſe at all.

There are ſome other inſtances in which the evangeliſts honeſtly relate what, they muſt have perceived, would make againſt them.

Of this kind is John the Baptiſt's meſſage preſerved by St. Matthew and St. Luke, (xi. 2, 3. vii. 19) "Now when John had heard, in the priſon, the works of Chriſt, he ſent two of his diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come, or look we for another?" To confeſs, ſtill more to ſtate, that John the Baptiſt had his doubts concerning the character of Jeſus, could not but afford a handle to cavil and objection. But truth, like honeſty, neglects appearances. The ſame obſervation, perhaps, holds concerning the apoſtacy of Judas.[b]

[a] Vol. IX. c. 50. note 96.

[b] I had once placed amongſt theſe examples of fair conceſſion, the remarkable words of St. Matthew, in his account of Chriſt's appearance upon the Galilean mountain; "and when they ſaw him, they worſhipped him, *but ſome doubted*."* I have ſince, however, been convinced, by what is obſerved concerning this paſſage† in Dr. Townſend's diſcourſe upon the reſurrection, that the tranſaction, as related by St. Matthew, was really this: "Chriſt appeared firſt at a diſtance; the greater part of the company, the moment they ſaw him, worſhipped; but ſome, as yet, i. e. upon this firſt diſtant view of his perſon, doubted; whereupon Chriſt *came up*‡ to them and ſpake to them," &c.: that the doubt, therefore, was a doubt only at firſt, for a moment, and upon his being ſeen at a diſtance, and was afterwards diſpelled by his nearer approach, and by his entering into converſation with them.

* *xxviii.* 17. † *Page* 177.

‡ St. Matthew's words are, Και προσελθων ο Ιησους ελαλησεν αυτοις. This intimates, that when he firſt appeared, it was at a diſtance, at leaſt from many of the ſpectators. (Ib. p. 197.)

John vi. 66. "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Was it the part of a writer, who dealt in suppression and disguise, to put down *this* anecdote?

Or this, which Matthew has preserved, (xiii. 58.) "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

Again, in the same evangelist, (ver. 17, 18.) "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for, verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." At the time the gospels were written, the apparent tendency of Christ's mission was to diminish the authority of the Mosaic code, and it was so considered by the Jews themselves. It is very improbable, therefore, that, without the constraint of truth, Matthew should have ascribed a saying to Christ, which, *primo intuitu*, militated with the judgment of the age in which his gospel was written. Marcion thought this text so objectionable, that he altered the words so as to invert the sense.[a]

Once more, Acts xxv. 19. "They brought none accusation against him, of such things, as I supposed, but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Nothing could be more in the character of a Roman governor than these words. But that is not precisely the point I am concerned with. A mere panegyrist, or a dishonest narrator, would not have represented his cause or have made a great magistrate represent it, in this manner, i. e. in terms not a little disparaging, and bespeaking on his part much unconcern and indifference about the matter. The same observation may be repeated of the speech which is ascribed to Gallio. (Acts viii. 14.) "If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it, for I will be no judge of such matters.

Lastly, where do we discern a stronger mark of candour, or less disposition to extol and magnify, than in the conclusion of the same history? in which the evangelist, after relating that Paul, upon his first arrival at Rome, preached to the Jews from morning until evening, adds, "and some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

[a] Lard. vol. XV. p. 422.

The following, I think, are paſſages, which were very unlikely to have preſented themſelves to the mind of a forger or a fabuliſt.

Mat. xxi. 21. "Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye ſhall not only do this, which is done unto the fig-tree, but alſo, if ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou caſt into the ſea, it ſhall be done; all things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, it ſhall be done."[a] It appears to me very improbable, that theſe words ſhould have been put into Chriſt's mouth, if he had not actually ſpoken them. The term "faith," as here uſed, is perhaps rightly interpreted of confidence in that internal notice, by which the apoſtles were admoniſhed of their power to perform any particular miracle. And this expoſition renders the ſenſe of the text more eaſy. But the words, undoubtedly, in their obvious conſtruction, carry with them a difficulty, which no writer would have brought upon himſelf officiouſly.

Luke ix. 59. "And he ſaid unto another, follow me; but he ſaid, Lord, ſuffer me firſt to go and bury my father. Jeſus ſaid unto him, let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."[b] This anſwer, though very expreſſive of the tranſcendent importance of religious concerns, was apparently harſh and repulſive; and ſuch as would not have been made for Chriſt, if he had not really uſed it. At leaſt, ſome other inſtance would have been choſen.

The following paſſage, I, for the ſame reaſon, think impoſſible to have been the production of artifice, or of a cold forgery: —"But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever is angry with his brother, without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgment; and whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, Raca, ſhall be in danger of the council; but whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of hell-fire (Gehennæ)." Mat. v. 22. It is emphatic, cogent, and well calculated for the purpoſe of impreſſion, but inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of art or warineſs on the part of the relator.

The ſhort reply of our Lord to Mary Magdalen after his reſurrection, (John xx. 16, 17.) "Touch me not, for I am not yet aſcended unto my Father," in my opinion, muſt have been founded in a reference or alluſion to ſome prior converſation,

[a] See alſo xvii. 20. Luke xvii. 6. [b] See alſo Mat. viii. 21.

for the want of knowing which, his meaning is hidden from us. This very obſcurity, however, is a proof of genuineneſs. No one would have forged ſuch an anſwer.

John vi. The whole of the converſation, recorded in this chapter, is, in the higheſt degree, unlikely to be fabricated, eſpecially the part of our Saviour's reply between the ſixtieth and the fifty-eighth verſe. I need only put down the firſt ſentence: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread he ſhall live forever; and the bread that I will give him is my fleſh, which I will give for the life of the world." Without calling in queſtion the expoſitions that have been given of this paſſage, we may be permitted to ſay, that it labours under an obſcurity, in which it is impoſſible to believe that any one, who made ſpeeches for the perſons of his narrative, would have voluntarily involved them. That this diſcourſe was obſcure even at the time, is confeſſed by the writer who has preſerved it, when he tells us at the concluſion, that many of our Lord's diſciples, when they had heard this, ſaid, "This is a hard ſaying, who can hear it?"

Chriſt's taking of a young child, and placing it in the midſt of his contentious diſciples, (Mat. xviii. 2.) though as deciſive a proof as any could be of the benignity of his temper, and very expreſſive of the character of the religion which he wiſhed to inculcate, was not by any means an obvious thought. Nor am I acquainted with any thing in any ancient writing which reſembles it.

The account of the inſtitution of the Euchariſt bears ſtrong internal marks of genuineneſs. If it had been feigned, it would have been more full. It would have come nearer to the actual mode of celebrating the rite, as that mode obtained very early in Chriſtian churches; and it would have been more formal than it is. In the forged piece called the apoſtolic conſtitutions, the apoſtles are made to enjoin many parts of the ritual, which was in uſe in the ſecond and third centuries, with as much particularity as a modern rubric could have done. Whereas, in the hiſtory of the Lord's ſupper, as we read it in St. Matthew's goſpel, there is not ſo much as the command to repeat it. This, ſurely, looks like undeſignedneſs. I think alſo that the difficulty, ariſing from the conciſeneſs of Chriſt's expreſſion, "This is my body," would have been avoided in a made-up ſtory. I allow that the explication of theſe words, given by Proteſtants, is ſatisfactory; but it is deduced from a diligent

comparifon of the words in queſtion with forms of expreſſion uſed in ſcripture, and eſpecially by Chriſt, upon other occaſions. No writer would, arbitrarily and unneceſſarily, have thus caſt in his reader's way a difficulty, which, to ſay the leaſt, it required reſearch and erudition to clear up.

Now it ought to be obſerved, that the argument which is built upon theſe examples, extends both to the authenticity of the books, and to the truth of the narrative; for it is improbable, that the forger of a hiſtory, in the name of another ſhould inſert ſuch paſſages into it; and it is improbable alſo, that the perſons whoſe names the books bear, ſhould fabricate ſuch paſſages; or even allow them a place in their work, if they had not believed them to expreſs the truth.

The following obſervation, therefore, of Dr. Lardner, the moſt candid of all advocates, and the moſt cautious of all inquirers, ſeems to be well founded:—"Chriſtians are induced to believe the writers of the goſpel, by obſerving the evidences of piety and probity that appear in their writings, in which there is no deceit or artifice, or cunning, or deſign." "No remarks," as Dr. Beattie hath properly ſaid, "are thrown in to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution, which never fails to diſtinguiſh the teſtimony of thoſe, who are conſcious of impoſture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative."

I beg leave to cite alſo another author,[a] who has well expreſſed the reflection, which the examples now brought forward were intended to ſuggeſt. "It doth not appear that ever it came into the mind of theſe writers, to conſider how this or the other action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raiſed upon them. But, without at all attending to this, they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their teſtimony, there is no help for it; they tell the truth, and attend to nothing elſe. Surely this looks like ſincerity, and that they publiſhed nothing to the world but what they believed themſelves."

As no improper ſupplement to this chapter, I crave a place for obſerving the extreme *naturalneſs* of ſome of the things related in the New Teſtament.

[a] Duchal, p. 97, 98.

Mark ix. 23, 24. Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." The struggle in the father's heart, between solicitude for the preservation of his child, and a kind of involuntary distrust of Christ's power to heal him, is here expressed with an air of reality, which could hardly be counterfeited.

Again, (Mat. xxi. 9.) the eagerness of the people to introduce Christ into Jerusalem, and their demand, a short time afterwards, of his crucifixion, when he did not turn out what they expected him to be, so far from affording matter of objection, represents popular favour, in exact agreement with nature and with experience, as the flux and reflux of a wave.

The rulers and pharisees rejecting Christ, whilst many of the common people received him, was the effect which, in the then state of Jewish prejudices, I should have expected. And the reason with which they who rejected Christ's mission kept themselves in countenance, and with which also they answered the arguments of those who favoured it, is precisely the reason which such men usually give:—"Have any of the scribes or pharisees believed on him?" John vii. 8.

In our Lord's conversation at the well, (John iv. 29.) Christ had surprised the Samaritan woman, with an allusion to a single particular in her domestic situation, "Thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." The woman, soon after this, ran back to the city, and called out to her neighbours, "Come, see a man which told me *all things* that ever I did." This exaggeration appears to me very natural; especially in the hurried state of spirits into which the woman may be supposed to have been thrown.

The lawyer's subtlety in running a distinction upon the word neighbour, in the precept "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," was no less natural than our Saviour's answer was decisive and satisfactory. (Luke x. 29.) The lawyer of the New-Testament, it must be observed, was a Jewish divine.

The behaviour of Gallio, Acts xviii. 12—17, and of Festus, xxv. 18, 19, have been observed upon already.

The consistency of St. Paul's character throughout the whole of his history; the warmth and activity of his zeal, first against, and then for Christianity, carries with it very much of the appearance of truth.

There are alſo ſome *proprieties*, as they may be called, obſervable in the goſpels; that is, circumſtances ſeparately ſuiting with the ſituation, character, and intention of their reſpective authors.

St. Matthew, who was an inhabitant of Galilee, and did not join Chriſt's ſociety until ſome time after Chriſt had come into Galilee to preach, has given us very little of his hiſtory prior to that period. St. John, who had been converted before, and who wrote to ſupply omiſſions in the other goſpels, relates ſome remarkable particulars, which had taken place before Chriſt left Judea to go into Galilee.[a]

St. Matthew (xv. 1.) has recorded the cavil of the phariſees againſt the diſciples of Jeſus for eating "with unclean hands." St. Mark has alſo (vii. 1.) recorded the ſame tranſaction, (taken probably from St. Matthew) but with this addition, "for the phariſees, and all the Jews, except they waſh their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders: and when they come from the market, except they waſh they eat not; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the waſhing of cups and pots, brazen veſſels, and of tables." Now St. Matthew was not only a Jew himſelf, but it is evident, from the whole ſtructure of his goſpel, eſpecially from his numerous references to the Old Teſtament, that he wrote for Jewiſh readers. The above explanation therefore in him would have been unnatural, as not being wanted by the readers whom he addreſſed. But in Mark, who, whatever uſe he might make of Matthew's goſpel, intended his own narrative for the general circulation, and who himſelf travelled to diſtant countries in the ſervice of the religion, it was properly added.

CHAP. IV.

Identity of Chriſt's Character.

THE argument expreſſed by this title I apply principally to the compariſon of the three firſt goſpels with that of St. John. It is known to every reader of ſcripture, that the paſſages of Chriſt's hiſtory preſerved by St. John, are, except his paſſion and reſurrection, for the moſt part different from thoſe which

[a] Hartley's Obſ. vol. II. p. 103.

are delivered by the other evangeliſts. And I think the ancient account of this difference to be the true one, viz. that St. John wrote after the reſt, and to ſupply what he thought omiſſions in their narratives, of which the principal were our Saviour's conferences with the Jews of Jeruſalem, and his diſcourſes to his apoſtles at his laſt ſupper. But what I obſerve in the compariſon of theſe ſeveral accounts is, that, although actions and diſcourſes are aſcribed to Chriſt by St. John, in general different from what are given to him by the other evangeliſts, yet, under this diverſity, there is a ſimilitude of *manner*, which indicates that the actions and diſcourſes proceeded from the ſame perſon. I ſhould have laid little ſtreſs upon a repetition of actions ſubſtantially alike, or of diſcourſes containing many of the ſame expreſſions, becauſe that is a ſpecies of reſemblance which would either belong to a true hiſtory, or might eaſily be imitated in a falſe one. Nor do I deny, that a dramatic writer is able to ſuſtain propriety and diſtinction of character, through a great variety of ſeparate incidents and ſituations. But the evangeliſts were not dramatic writers; nor poſſeſſed the talents of dramatic writers; nor will it, I believe, be ſuſpected, that they *ſtudied* uniformity of character, or ever thought of any ſuch thing, in the perſon who was the ſubject of their hiſtories. Such uniformity, if it exiſt, is on their part caſual; and if there be, as I contend there is, a perceptible reſemblance of *manner*, in paſſages, and between diſcourſes, which are in themſelves extremely diſtinct, and are delivered by hiſtorians writing without any imitation of, or reference to one another, it affords a juſt preſumption, that theſe are, what they profeſs to be, the actions and the diſcourſes of the ſame real perſon; that the evangeliſts wrote from fact, and not from imagination. The article in which I find this agreement moſt ſtrong, is in our Saviour's mode of teaching, and in that particular property of it, which conſiſts in his drawing of his doctrine from the occaſion; or, which is nearly the ſame thing, raiſing reflections from the objects and incidents before him, or turning a particular diſcourſe then paſſing into an opportunity of general inſtruction.

It will be my buſineſs to point out this *manner* in the three firſt evangeliſts; and then to inquire, whether it do not appear alſo, in ſeveral examples of Chriſt's diſcourſes, preſerved by St. John.

The reader will obſerve in the following quotation, that the italic letter contains the reflection, the common letter the incident or occaſion from whence it ſprings.

Mat. xii. 49, 50. "Then they ſaid unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren ſtand without, deſiring to ſpeak with thee. But he anſwered, and ſaid unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he ſtretched forth his hands towards his diſciples, and ſaid, Behold my mother and my brethren; *for whoſoever ſhall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the ſame is my brother, and ſiſter, and mother.*"

Mat. xvi. 5. "And when his diſciples were come to the other ſide, they had forgotten to take bread; then Jeſus ſaid unto them, *Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the phariſees, and of the ſadducees.* And they reaſoned among themſelves, ſaying, it is becauſe we have taken no bread.—How is it that ye do not underſtand, that I ſpake it not to you concerning bread, that ye ſhould beware of the leaven of the phariſees and of the ſadducees? Then underſtood they *how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the* DOCTRINE *of the phariſees and of the ſadducees.*"

Mat. xv. 1, 2, 10, 11, 17—20. "Then came to Jeſus ſcribes and phariſees, which were of Jeruſalem, ſaying, Why do thy diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the elders? for they waſh not their hands when they eat bread.—And he called the multitude, and ſaid unto them, Hear and underſtand, *not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*—Then anſwered Peter, and ſaid unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jeſus ſaid, Are ye alſo yet without underſtanding? Do ye not yet underſtand, that whatſoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is caſt out into the draught? but thoſe things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man; *for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theſts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies; theſe are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwaſhen hands defileth not a man.*" Our Saviour, upon this occaſion, expatiates rather more at large than uſual, and his diſcourſe alſo is more divided; but the concluding ſentence brings back the whole train of thought to the incident in the firſt verſe, viz. the objurgatory queſtion of the phariſees, and renders it evident that the whole ſprung from that circumſtance.

Mark x. 13, 14, 15. "And they brought young children to him, that he ſhould touch them, and his diſciples rebuked thoſe that brought them; but when Jeſus ſaw it, he was much diſpleaſed, and ſaid unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, *for of ſuch is the kingdom of God: verily I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he ſhall not enter therein.*"

Mark i. 16, 17. "Now as he walked by the ſea of Galilee, he ſaw Simon and Andrew his brother, caſting a net into the ſea, for they were fiſhers; and Jeſus ſaid unto them, *Come ye after me, and I will make you fiſhers of men.*"

Luke xi. 27. "And it came to paſs as he ſpake theſe things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice and ſaid unto him, Bleſſed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou haſt ſucked; but he ſaid, *Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*"

Luke xiii. 1—5. "There were preſent at that ſeaſon ſome that told him of the Galileans, whoſe blood Pilate had mingled with their ſacrifices; and Jeſus anſwering, ſaid unto them, *Suppoſe ye that theſe Galileans were ſinners above all the Galileans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things? I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*"

Luke xiv. 15. "And when one of them that ſat at meat with him, heard theſe things, he ſaid unto him, Bleſſed is he that ſhall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then ſaid he unto him, *A certain man made a great ſupper and bade many,*" &c. The parable is rather too long for inſertion, but affords a ſtriking inſtance of Chriſt's *manner* of raiſing a diſcourſe from the occaſion. Obſerve alſo in the ſame chapter, two other examples of advice, drawn from the circumſtances of the entertainment, and the behaviour of the gueſts.

We will now ſee, how this *manner* diſcovers itſelf in St. *John*'s hiſtory of Chriſt.

John vi. 26. "And when they had found him on the other ſide of the ſea, they ſaid unto him, Rabbi, when cameſt thou hither? Jeſus anſwered them, and ſaid, Verily I ſay unto you, ye ſeek me not becauſe ye ſaw the miracles, but becauſe ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. *Labour not for the meat which periſheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlaſting life, which the Son of Man ſhall give unto you.*"

John iv. 12. "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himſelf, and his chil-

dren, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, (the woman of Samaria) Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but *whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.*"

John iv. 31. "In the mean while, his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat; but he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? Jesus saith unto them, *My meat is, to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*"

John ix. 1—5. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth; and his disciples asked him, saying, Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.*"

John ix. 35—40. "Jesus heard that they had cast him (the blind man above-mentioned) out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? And he answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him. And Jesus said, *For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.*"

All that the reader has now to do, is to compare the series of examples taken from St. John, with the series of examples taken from the other evangelists, and to judge whether there be not a visible agreement of *manner* between them. In the above quoted passages, the occasion is stated, as well as the reflection. They seem therefore the most proper for the purpose of our argument. A large, however, and curious collection has been made by different writers,[a] of instances, in which it is extremely probable, that Christ spoke in allusion to some object, or some occasion then before him, though the mention of the occasion, or of the object, be omitted in the history. I only ob-

[a] Newton on Dan. p. 148. note *a*. Jortin Dis. p. 213. Bishop Law's Life of Christ.

ſerve that theſe inſtances are common to St. John's goſpel with the other three.

I conclude this article by remarking, that nothing of this *manner* is perceptible in the ſpeeches recorded in the Acts, or in any other but thoſe which are attributed to Chriſt, and that, in truth, it was a very unlikely manner for a forger or fabuliſt to attempt; and a manner very difficult for any writer to execute, if he had to ſupply all the materials, both the incidents, and the obſervations upon them, out of his own head. A forger or a fabuliſt would have made for Chriſt, diſcourſes exhorting to virtue and diſſuading from vice in general terms. It would never have entered into the thoughts of either, to have crowded together ſuch a number of alluſions to time, place, and other little circumſtances, as occur, for inſtance, in the ſermon on the mount, and which nothing but the actual preſence of the objects could have ſuggeſted.[a]

II. There appears to me to exiſt an affinity between the hiſtory of Chriſt's placing a little child in the midſt of his diſciples, as related by the three firſt evangeliſts,[b] and the hiſtory of Chriſt's waſhing his diſciples' feet, as given by St. John.[c] In the ſtories themſelves there is no reſemblance. But the affinity, which I would point out, conſiſts in theſe two articles; firſt, that both ſtories denote the emulation which prevailed amongſt Chriſt's diſciples, and his own care and deſire to correct it. The moral of both is the ſame. Secondly, that both ſtories are ſpecimens of the ſame manner of teaching, viz. by action; a mode of emblematic inſtruction extremely peculiar, and, in theſe paſſages, aſcribed, we ſee, to our Saviour, by the three firſt evangeliſts and by St. John, in inſtances totally unlike, and without the ſmalleſt ſuſpicion of their borrowing from each other.

III. A ſingularity in Chriſt's language, which runs through all the evangeliſts, and which is found in thoſe diſcourſes of St. John, that have nothing ſimilar to them in the other goſpels, is the appellation of "the Son of Man;" and it is in all the evangeliſts found under the peculiar circumſtance of being applied by Chriſt to himſelf, but of never being uſed of him, or towards him, by any other perſon. It occurs ſeventeen times

[a] See Biſhop Law's Life of Chriſt.

[b] Mat. xviii. 1. Mark ix. 33. Luke ix. 46.

[c] xiii. 3.

in Matthew's gospel, twelve times in Mark's, twenty-one times in Luke's, and eleven times in John's, and always with this restriction.

IV. A point of agreement in the conduct of Christ, as represented by his different historians, is that of his withdrawing himself out of the way, whenever the behaviour of the multitude indicated a disposition to tumult.

Mat. xiv. 22. "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitude away. And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray."

Luke v. 15, 16. "But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him, and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities: and he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed."

With these quotations compare the following from St. John.

Chap. v. 13. "And he that was healed wist not who it was, for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place."

Chap. vi. 15. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain by himself alone."

In this last instance St. John gives the motive of Christ's conduct, which is left unexplained by the other evangelists, who have related the conduct itself.

V. Another, and a more singular circumstance in Christ's ministry, was the reserve, which, for some time, and upon some occasions at least, he used in declaring his own character, and his leaving it to be collected from his works rather than his professions. Just reasons for this reserve have been assigned.[a] But it is not what one would have expected. We meet with it in Matthew's gospel (xvi. 20.) "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Again, and upon a different occasion, in Mark's, (iii. 4.) "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God; and he straightly charged them that they should not make him known." Another instance similar to this last is recorded by St. Luke, (iv. 41.) What we thus find in the three evangelists, appears

[a] See Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity.

alſo in a paſſage of St. John (x. 24, 25.) "Then came the Jews round about him, and ſaid unto him, How long doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly." The occaſion here was different from any of the reſt; and it was indirect. We only diſcover Chriſt's conduct through the upbraidings of his adverſaries. But all this ſtrengthens the argument. I had rather at any time ſurpriſe a coincidence in ſome oblique alluſion, than read it in broad aſſertions.

VI. In our Lord's commerce with his diſciples, one very obſervable particular, is the difficulty which they found in underſtanding him, when he ſpoke to them of the future part of his hiſtory, eſpecially of what related to his paſſion or reſurrection. This difficulty produced, as was natural, a wiſh in them to aſk for further explanation; from which, however, they appear to have been ſometimes kept back, by the fear of giving offence. All theſe circumſtances are diſtinctly noticed by Mark and Luke, upon the occaſion of his informing them (probably for the firſt time) that the Son of Man ſhould be delivered into the hands of men. "They underſtood not," the evangeliſts tell us, "this ſaying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not; and they feared to aſk him of that ſaying." (Luke ix. 45. Mark ix. 32.) In St. John's goſpel we have, upon a different occaſion and in a different inſtance, the ſame difficulty of apprehenſion, the ſame curioſity, and the ſame reſtraint:—"A little while, and ye ſhall not ſee me: and again a little while, and ye ſhall ſee me; becauſe I go to the Father. Then ſaid ſome of his diſciples among themſelves, What is this that he ſaith unto us? A little while, and ye ſhall not ſee me: and again a little while, and ye ſhall ſee me; and, Becauſe I go to the Father? They ſaid, therefore, What is this that he ſaith, A little while? We cannot tell what he ſaith. Now Jeſus knew that they were deſirous to aſk him, and ſaid unto them," &c. John xvi. 16, et ſeq.

VII. The meekneſs of Chriſt during his laſt ſufferings, which is conſpicuous in the narratives of the three firſt evangeliſts, is preſerved in that of St. John under ſeparate examples. The anſwer given him, in St. John,[a] when the high-prieſt aſked him of his diſciples and his doctrine, "I ſpake openly to the world, I ever taught in the ſynagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always reſort, and in ſecret have I ſaid noth-

[a] xviii. 20.

ing, why aſkeſt thou me? Aſk them which heard me what I have ſaid unto them;" is very much of a piece with his reply to the armed party which ſeized him, as we read it in St. Mark's goſpel, and in St. Luke's:[a] "Are ye come out as againſt a thief, with ſwords and with ſtaves, to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." In both anſwers we diſcern the ſame tranquillity, the ſame reference to his public teaching. His mild expoſtulation with Pilate upon two ſeveral occaſions, as related by St. John,[b] is delivered with the ſame unruffled temper, as that which conducted him through the laſt ſcene of his life, as deſcribed by his other evangeliſts. His anſwer, in St. John's goſpel, to the officer who ſtruck him with the palm of his hand, "If I have ſpoken evil, bear witneſs of the evil, but if well, why ſmiteſt thou me?"[c] was ſuch an anſwer, as might have been looked for from the perſon, who, as he proceeded to the place of execution, bid his companions (as we are told by St. Luke [d]) weep not for him, but for themſelves, their poſterity, and their country; and who prayed for his murderers, whilſt he was ſuſpended upon the croſs, "For they know not (ſaid he) what they do." The urgency alſo of his judges and his proſecutors to extort from him a defence to the accuſation, and his unwillingneſs to make any (which was a peculiar circumſtance) appears in St. John's account, as well as that of the other evangeliſts.[e]

There are moreover two other correſpondencies between St. John's hiſtory of the tranſaction and their's, of a kind ſomewhat different from thoſe which we have been now mentioning.

The three firſt evangeliſts record what is called our Saviour's agony, i. e. his devotion in the garden, immediately before he was apprehended; in which narrative they all make him pray, "that the cup might paſs from him." This is the particular metaphor which they all aſcribe to him. St. Matthew adds, "O my Father, if this cup may not paſs away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."[f] Now St. John does not give the ſcene in the garden; but when Jeſus was ſeized, and ſome reſiſtance was attempted to be made by Peter, Jeſus, according to his account, checked the attempt with this reply: "Put up thy ſword into the ſheath; the cup,

[a] Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxii. 52. [b] xviii. 34. xix. 11.
[c] xxviii. 23. [d] xxiii. 28.
[e] See John xix 9. Matt. xxvii. 14. Luke xxiii. 9. [f] xxvi. 42.

which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?"[a] This is something more than bare consistency; it is coincidence: because it is extremely natural, that Jesus, who, before he was apprehended, had been praying his Father, that "that cup might pass from him," yet with such a pious retraction of his request, as to have added, "If this cup may not pass from me, thy will be done;" it was natural, I say, for the same person, when he actually was apprehended, to express the resignation to which he had already made up his thoughts, and to express it in the form of speech which he had before used, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" This is a coincidence between writers, in whose narratives there is no imitation, but great diversity.

A second similar correspondency is the following: Matthew and Mark make the charge, upon which our Lord was condemned, to be a threat of destroying the temple; "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple, made with hands, and, within three days, I will build another made without hands;"[b] but they neither of them inform us, upon what circumstance this calumny was founded. St. John, in the early part of his history,[c] supplies us with this information; for he relates, that, upon our Lord's first journey to Jerusalem, when the Jews asked him, "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? He answered, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This agreement could hardly arise from any thing but the truth of the case. From any care or design in St. John, to make his narrative tally with the narratives of the other evangelists, it certainly did not arise, for no such design appears, but the absence of it.

A strong, and more general instance of agreement, is the following: The three first evangelists have related the appointment of the twelve apostles;[d] and have given a catalogue of their names in form. John, without ever mentioning the appointment, or giving the catalogue, supposes, throughout his whole narrative, Christ to be accompanied by a select party of disciples; the number of these to be twelve;[e] and, whenever he happens to notice any one as of that number,[f] it is one included in the catalogue of the other evangelists; and the names

[a] xviii. 11. [b] Mark xiv. 5. [c] ii. 19.
[d] Matt. x. 1. Mark iii. 14. Luke vi. 12. vi. 7.
[f] xx. 24. vi. 71.

principally occurring in the courſe of *his* hiſtory of Chriſt, are the names extant in their liſt. This laſt agreement, which is of conſiderable moment, runs through every goſpel, and through every chapter of each.

All this beſpeaks reality.

CHAP. V.

Originality of our Saviour's Character.

THE Jews, whether right or wrong, had underſtood their prophecies to foretel the advent of a perſon, who, by ſome ſupernatural aſſiſtance, ſhould advance their nation to independence, and to a ſupreme degree of ſplendour and proſperity. This was the reigning opinion and expectation of the times.

Now, had Jeſus been an enthuſiaſt, it is probable that his enthuſiaſm would have fallen in with the popular deluſion, and that, whilſt he gave himſelf out to be the perſon intended by theſe predictions, he would have aſſumed the character, to which they were univerſally ſuppoſed to relate.

Had he been an impoſtor, it was his buſineſs to have flattered the prevailing hopes, becauſe theſe hopes were to be the inſtruments of his attraction and ſucceſs.

But what is better than conjectures, is the fact, that all the pretended Meſſiahs actually did ſo. We learn from Joſephus that there were many of theſe. Some of them, it is probable, might be impoſtors, who thought that an advantage was to be taken of the ſtate of public opinion. Others, perhaps, were enthuſiaſts, whoſe imagination had been drawn to this particular object, by the language and ſentiments which prevailed around them. But, whether impoſtors or enthuſiaſts, they concurred in producing themſelves in the character which their countrymen looked for, that is to ſay, as the reſtorers and deliverers of the nation, in that ſenſe in which reſtoration and deliverance were expected by the Jews.

Why therefore Jeſus, if he was like them, either an enthuſiaſt or impoſtor, did not purſue the ſame conduct as they did, in framing his character and pretenſions, it will be found difficult to explain. A miſſion, the operation and benefit of which was to take place in another life, was a thing unthought of as the

ſubject of theſe prophecies. That Jeſus, coming to them as their Meſſiah, ſhould come under a character totally different from that in which they expected him; ſhould deviate from the general perſuaſion, and deviate into pretenſions abſolutely ſingular and original, appears to be inconſiſtent with the imputation of enthuſiaſm or impoſture, both which, by their nature, I ſhould expect, would, and both which, throughout the experience which this very ſubject furniſhes, in fact *have* followed, the opinions that obtained at the time.

If it be ſaid, that Jeſus, having tried the other plan, turned at length to this; I anſwer, that the thing is ſaid without evidence; againſt evidence; that it was competent to the reſt to have done the ſame, yet that nothing of this ſort was thought of by any.

CHAP. VI.

ONE argument, which has been much relied upon, (but not more than its juſt weight deſerves) is the conformity of the facts, occaſionally mentioned or referred to in ſcripture, with the ſtate of things in thoſe times, as repreſented by foreign and independent accounts. Which conformity proves, that the writers of the New Teſtament poſſeſſed a ſpecies of local knowledge, which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, and to one living in that age. This argument, if well made out by examples, is very little ſhort of proving the abſolute genuineneſs of the writings. It carries them up to the age of the reputed authors, to an age, in which it muſt have been difficult to impoſe upon the Chriſtian public forgeries in the names of of thoſe authors, and in which there is no evidence that any forgeries were attempted. It proves at leaſt, that the books, whoever were the authors of them, were compoſed by perſons living in the time and country in which theſe things were tranſacted, and, conſequently, capable, by their ſituation, of being well informed of the facts which they relate. And the argument is ſtronger, when applied to the New Teſtament, than it is in the caſe of almoſt any other writings, by reaſon of the mixed nature of the alluſions which this book contains. The ſcene of action is not confined to a ſingle country, but diſplayed in the greateſt cities of the Roman empire. Alluſions are made to the manners and

principles of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. This variety renders a forgery proportionably more difficult, especially to writers of a posterior age. A Greek or Roman Christian, who lived in the second or third century, would have been wanting in Jewish literature; a Jewish convert in those ages would have been equally deficient in the knowledge of Greece and Rome.[a]

This, however, is an argument which depends entirely upon an induction of particulars; and as, consequently, it carries with it little force, without a view of the instances upon which it is built, I have to request the reader's attention to a detail of examples, distinctly and articulately proposed. In collecting these examples, I have done no more than to epitomize the first volume of the first part of Dr. Lardner's credibility of the gospel history. And I have brought the argument within its present compass, first, by passing over some of his sections in which the accordancy appeared to me less certain, or upon subjects not sufficiently appropriate or circumstantial; secondly, by contracting every section into the fewest words possible, contenting myself for the most part with a mere apposition of passages; and, thirdly, by omitting many disquisitions, which, though learned and accurate, are not absolutely necessary to the understanding or verification of the argument.

The writer, principally made use of in the inquiry, is Josephus. Josephus was born at Jerusalem four years after Christ's ascension. He wrote his history of the Jewish war some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in the year of our Lord seventy, that is, thirty-seven years after the ascension; and his history of the Jews he finished in the year ninety-three, that is, sixty years after the ascension.

At the head of each article, I have referred, by figures included in brackets, to the page of Dr. Lardner's volume where the section, from which the abridgment is made, begins. The edition used is that of 1741.

I. (p. 14) Mat. xi. 22. "When he (Joseph) heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee."

In this passage it is asserted, that Archelaus succeeded Herod in Judea; and it is implied, that his power did *not* extend to

[a] Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament, (Marsh's translation) c. ii. sec. xi.

Galilee. Now we learn from Josephus, that Herod the Great, whose dominion included all the land of Israel, appointed Archelaus his successor in *Judea*, and assigned the *rest* of his dominions to other sons; and that this disposition was ratified, as to the main parts of it, by the Roman emperor.[a]

St. Matthew says, that Archelaus *reigned*, was *king* in Judea. Agreeably to this, we are informed by Josephus, not only that Herod appointed Archelaus his successor in Judea, but that he also appointed him with the title of king; and the verb (βασιλευειν) which the evangelist uses to denote the government and rank of Archelaus, is used likewise by Josephus.[b]

The cruelty of Archelaus's character, which is not obscurely intimated by the evangelist, agrees with divers particulars in his history, preserved by Josephus. "In the tenth year of his government, the chief of the Jews and Samaritans, not being able to endure his cruelty and tyranny, presented complaints against him to Cæsar."[c]

II. (p. 19.) Luke iii. 1. "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar—Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and of the region of Trachonitis—the word of God came unto John."

By the will of Herod the Great, and the decree of Augustus thereupon, his two sons were appointed, one (Herod Antipas) tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, and the other (Philip) tetrarch of Trachonitis and the neighbouring countries.[d] We have therefore these two persons in the situations in which St. Luke places them; and also, that they were in these situations in the *fifteenth* year of Tiberius, in other words, that they continued in possession of their territories and titles until that time, and afterwards, appears from a passage of Josephus, which relates of Herod, "that he was *removed* by Caligula, the successor of Tiberius;[e] and of Philip, that he died in the *twentieth* year of Tiberius, when he had governed Trachonitis and Batanea and Gaulanitis thirty-seven years."[f]

III. (p. 20.) Mark vi. 17.[g] "Herod had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison, for Herodias's sake, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her."

[a] Ant. lib. 17. c. 8. sec. 1. [b] De Bell. lib. 1. c. 33. sec. 7.
[c] Ant. lib. 17. c. 13. sec. 1.
[d] Ant. lib. 17. c. 8. sec. 1. [e] Ant. lib. 18. c. 8. sec. 2.
[f] Ant. lib. 18. c. 5. sec. 6.
[g] See also Mat. xiv. 1—13. Luke iii. 19.

With this compare Joſ. Ant. l. 18. c. 6. ſec. 1. "He (Herod the tetrarch) made a viſit to Herod his brother—— Here, falling in love with Herodias, the wife of the ſaid Herod, he ventured to make her propoſals of marriage."[a]

Again, Mark vi. 22. "And when the *daughter of the ſaid Herodias* came in and danced."

With this alſo compare Joſ. Ant. l. 18. c. 6. ſec. 4. "Herodias was married to Herod, ſon of Herod the Great. *They had a daughter*, whoſe name was Salome; after whoſe birth, Herodias, in utter violation of the laws of her country, left her huſband then living, and married Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, her huſband's brother by the father's ſide."

IV. (p. 29.) Acts xii. 1. "Now, about that time, *Herod the king* ſtretched forth his hands, to vex certain of the church." In the concluſion of the ſame chapter, Herod's *death* is repreſented to have taken place, ſoon after this perſecution. The accuracy of our hiſtorian, or, rather, the unmeditated coincidence, which truth of its own accord produces, is in this inſtance remarkable. There was no portion of time, for thirty years before, nor ever afterwards, in which there was a *king* at Jeruſalem, a perſon exerciſing that authority in Judea, or to whom that title could be applied, except the three laſt years of this Herod's life, within which period, the tranſaction recorded in the Acts is ſtated to have taken place. This prince was the grandſon of Herod the Great. In the Acts he appears under his family name of Herod; by Joſephus he is called Agrippa. For proof that he was a *king*, properly ſo called, we have the teſtimony of Joſephus in full and direct terms:—"Sending for him to his palace, Caligula put a crown upon his head, and appointed him king of the tetrarchie of Philip, intending alſo to

[a] The affinity of the two accounts is unqueſtionable; but there is a difference in the name of Herodias's firſt huſband, which, in the evangeliſt, is Philip, in Joſephus, Herod. The difficulty, however, will not appear conſiderable, when we recollect how common it was in thoſe times, for the ſame perſon to bear two names: Simon, which is called Peter; Lebbeus, whoſe ſirname is Thaddeus; Thomas, which is called Didymus; Simeon, who was called Niger; Saul, who was alſo called Paul." The ſolution is likewiſe rendered eaſier in the preſent caſe, by the conſideration, that Herod the Great had children by ſeven or eight wives; that Joſephus mentions three of his ſons under the name of Herod; that it is nevertheleſs highly probable, that the brothers bore ſome additional name, by which they were diſtinguiſhed from one another. Lard. vol. II. p. 897.

give him the tetrarchie of Lyſanias."[a] And that Judea was at laſt, but not until the laſt, included in his dominions, appears by a ſubſequent paſſage of the ſame Joſephus, wherein he tells us, that Claudius by a decree confirmed to Agrippa the dominion which Caligula had given him, *adding alſo Judea and Samaria, in the utmoſt extent, as poſſeſſed by his grandfather Herod.*[b]

V. (p. 32.) Acts xii. 19, 23. "And he (Herod) went down from Judea to Cæſarea, and there abode. And upon a ſet day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, ſat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them; and the people gave a ſhout, ſaying, It is the voice of a god and not of a man; and immediately the angel of the Lord ſmote him, becauſe he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghoſt."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xix. c. 8. ſec. 2. "He went to the city Cæſarea. Here he celebrated ſhows in honour of Cæſar. On the ſecond day of the ſhows, early in the morning, he came into the theatre, dreſſed in a robe of ſilver, of moſt curious workmanſhip. The rays of the riſing ſun, reflected from ſo ſplendid a garb, gave him a majeſtic and awful appearance. They called him a god, and entreated him to be propitious to them, ſaying, Hitherto we have reſpected you as a man, but now we acknowledge you to be more than mortal. The king neither reproved theſe perſons, nor rejected the impious flattery. Immediately after this, he was ſeized with pains in his bowels, extremely violent at the very firſt. He was carried therefore with all haſte to his palace. Theſe pains continually tormenting him, he expired in five days time."

The reader will perceive the accordancy of theſe accounts in various particulars. The place, (Cæſarea) the ſet day, the gorgeous dreſs, the acclamations of the aſſembly, the peculiar turn of the flattery, the reception of it, the ſudden and critical incurſion of the diſeaſe, are circumſtances noticed in both narratives. The worms mentioned by St. Luke are not remarked by Joſephus, but the appearance of theſe is a ſymptom, not unuſually, I believe, attending the diſeaſe, which Joſephus deſcribes, viz. violent affections of the bowels.

VI. (p. 41.) Acts xxiv. 24. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Druſilla, which was a Jeweſs, he ſent for Paul.

a Ant. xviii. c. vii. ſec. 10. b Ib. xix. c. v. ſec. 1.

Jof. Ant. lib. xx. c. 6. fec. 1, 2. "Agrippa gave his ſiſter Druſilla in marriage to Azizus, king of the Emeſenes, when he had conſented to be circumciſed—But this marriage of Druſilla with Azizus was diſſolved in a ſhort time after in this manner: when *Felix was procurator of Judea*, having had ſight of her, he was mightily taken with her— She was induced to tranſgreſs the laws of her country, and marry Felix."

Here the public ſtation of Felix, the name of his wife, and the ſingular circumſtance of her religion, all appear in perfect conformity with the evangeliſt.

VII. (p. 46.) "And after certain days, king Agrippa and Bernice came to Cæſarea to ſalute Feſtus." By this paſſage we are in effect told, that Agrippa was a king, but not of Judea; for he came to ſalute Feſtus, who at this time adminiſtered the government of that country at Cæſarea.

Now how does the hiſtory of the age correſpond with this account? The Agrippa, here ſpoken of, was the ſon of Herod Agrippa, mentioned in the laſt article; but that he did not ſucceed to his father's kingdom, nor ever recovered Judea, which had been a part of it, we learn by the information of Joſephus, who relates of him, that, when his father was dead, Claudius intended, at firſt, to have put him immediately in poſſeſſion of his father's dominions; but that Agrippa being then but ſeventeen years of age, the emperor was perſuaded to alter his mind, and appointed Cuſpius Fadus prefect of Judea and the whole kingdom;[a] which Fadus was ſucceeded by Tiberius Alexander, Cumanus, Felix, Feſtus.[b] But that, though diſappointed of his father's kingdom, in which was included Judea, he was nevertheleſs rightly ſtyled *king* Agrippa; and that he was in poſſeſſion of conſiderable territories bordering upon Judea, we gather from the ſame authority; for after ſeveral ſucceſſive donations of country, "Claudius, at the ſame time that he ſent Felix to be procurator of Judea, promoted Agrippa from Chalcis to a greater *kingdom*, giving to him the tetrarchie which had been Philip's; and he added moreover the *kingdom* of Lyſanias, and the province that had belonged to Varus."[c]

St. Paul addreſſes this perſon as a Jew: "King Agrippa, believeſt thou the prophets? I know that thou believeſt." As the ſon of Herod Agrippa, who is deſcribed by Joſephus to

[a] Ant. xix. c. ix. ad fin. [b] Ib. xx. de Bell. lib. II.
[c] De Bell. lib. II. c. xii. ad fin.

have been a zealous Jew, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that he maintained the ſame profeſſion. But what is more material to remark, becauſe it is more cloſe and circumſtantial, is, that St. Luke, ſpeaking of the father, (xii. 1, 3.) calls him Herod the king, and gives an example of the exerciſe of his authority at Jeruſalem; ſpeaking of the ſon, (xxv. 13.) he calls him king, but not of Judea; which diſtinction agrees correctly with the hiſtory.

VIII. (p. 51.) Acts xiii. 7. "And when they had gone through the iſle (Cyprus) to Paphos, they found a certain ſorcerer, a falſe prophet, a Jew, whoſe name was Barjeſus, which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man."

The word, which is here tranſlated deputy, ſignifies *proconſul*, and upon this word our obſervation is founded. The provinces of the Roman empire were of two kinds; thoſe belonging to the emperor, in which the governor was called proprætor; and thoſe belonging to the ſenate, in which the governor was called proconſul. And this was a regular diſtinction. Now it appears from Dio Caſſius,[a] that the province of Cyprus, which in the original diſtribution was aſſigned to the emperor, had been transferred to the ſenate, in exchange for ſome others; and that, after this exchange, the appropriate title of the Roman governor was proconſul.

Ib. xviii. 12. (p. 55.) "And when Gallio was deputy *(proconſul)* of Achaia."

The propriety of the title "proconſul" is in this paſſage ſtill more critical. For the province of Achaia, after paſſing from the ſenate to the emperor, had been reſtored again by the emperor Claudius to the ſenate (and conſequently its government had become proconſular) only ſix or ſeven years before the time in which this tranſaction is ſaid to have taken place.[b] And what confines with ſtrictneſs the appellation to the time is, that Achaia under the following reign ceaſed to be a Roman province at all.

IX. (p. 152.) It appears, as well from the general conſtitution of a Roman province, as from what Joſephus delivers concerning the ſtate of Judea in particular,[c] that the power of life and death reſided excluſively in the Roman governor, but

[a] Lib. 54. ad A. U. 732. [b] Suet. in Claud. c. 25. Dio. lib. 61.
[c] Ant. lib. 20. c. 8. ſec. 5. c. 1. ſec. 2.

that the Jews, nevertheleſs, had magiſtrates and a council, inveſted with a ſubordinate and municipal authority. This economy is diſcerned in every part of the goſpel narrative of our Saviour's crucifixion.

X. (p. 203.) Acts ix. 31. "Then had the churches reſt throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria."

This *reſt* ſynchroniſes with the attempt of Caligula to place his ſtatue in the temple of Jeruſalem; the threat of which outrage produced amongſt the Jews a conſternation, that for a ſeaſon diverted their attention from every other object.[a]

XI. (p. 218.) Acts xxi. 31. "And they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple; and forthwith the doors were ſhut. And as they went out to kill him, tidings came to the chief captain of the *band*, that all Jeruſalem was in an uproar. Then the chief captain came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and demanded who he was, and what he had done; and ſome cried one thing, and ſome another, among the multitude: and, when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the *caſtle*. And when he came upon the *ſtairs*, ſo it was, that he was borne of the ſoldiers for the violence of the people."

In this quotation, we have the band of Roman ſoldiers at Jeruſalem, their office (to ſuppreſs tumults) the caſtle, the ſtairs, both, as it ſhould ſeem, adjoining to the temple. Let us inquire whether we can find theſe particulars in any other record of that age and place.

Joſ. de Bell. lib. 5. c. 5. ſec. 8. "Antonia was ſituated at the angle of the weſtern and northern porticoes of the outer temple. It was built upon a rock fifty cubits high, ſteep on all ſides.—On that ſide, where it joined to the porticoes of the temple, there were *ſtairs* reaching to each portico, by which the *guard* deſcended; for there was always lodged here *a Roman legion*, and poſting themſelves in their armour in ſeveral places in the porticoes, they kept a watch on the people on the feaſt days *to prevent all diſorders*; for as the temple was a guard to the city, ſo was Antonia to the temple."

XII. (p. 224.) Acts iv. 1. "And as they ſpake unto the people, the prieſts and *the captain of the temple*, and the ſadducees, came upon them." Here we have a public officer under

[a] Joſ. de Bell. lib. 11. c. 10. ſec. 1, 3, 4.

the title of captain of the temple, and he probably a Jew, as he accompanied the priests and sadducees in apprehending the apostles.

Jos. de Bell. lib. 2. c. 17. sec. 2. "And at the *temple* Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high priest, a young man of a bold and resolute dispositon, then *captain*, persuaded those who performed the sacred ministrations, not to receive the gift or sacrifice of any stranger."

XIII. (p. 225.) Acts xxv. 12. "Then Festus, when he had conferred with the *council*, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go." That it was usual for the Roman presidents to have a council, consisting of their friends, and other chief Romans in the province, appears expressly in the following passage of Cicero's oration against Verres:—"Illud negare posses, aut nunc negabis, te, concilio tuo dimisso, viris primariis, qui in consilio C. Sacerdotis fuerant, tibique esse volebant, remotis, de rejudicatâ judicasse?"

XIV. (p. 235.) Acts xvi. 13. "And (at Philippi) on the Sabbath, we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made," or where a proseucha, oratory, or place of prayer, was allowed. The particularity to be remarked, is the situation of the place where prayer was wont to be made, viz. by a *river side*.

Philo, describing the conduct of the Jews of Alexandria upon a certain public occasion, relates of them, that, "early in the morning, flocking out of the gates of the city, they go to the *neighbouring shores*, (for the *proseuchæ* were destroyed) and standing in a most pure place, they lift up their voices with one accord."[a]

Josephus gives us a decree of the city of Halicarnassus, permitting the Jews to build oratories, a part of which decree runs thus:—"We ordain that the Jews, who are willing, men and women, do observe the Sabbaths, and perform sacred rites according to the Jewish laws, and *build oratories by the sea-side*."[b]

Tertullian, among other Jewish rites and customs, such as feasts, sabbaths, fasts, and unleavened bread, mentions orationes *litorales*, that is, prayers by the river side.[c]

XV. (p. 255.) Acts xxvi. 5. "After the most *straitest* sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee."

[a] Philo in Flacc. p. 384. [b] Jos. Ant. lib. 14. c. 10. sec. 24.
[c] Tertull. ad Nat. lib. 1. c. 13.

Joſ. de Bell. l. 1. c. 5. ſec. 2. "The Phariſees were reckoned the moſt religious of any of the Jews, and to be the moſt *exact* and ſkilful in explaining the laws."

In the original there is an agreement, not only in the ſenſe but in the expreſſion, it being the ſame Greek adjective, which is rendered "ſtrait" in the Acts, and "exact" in Joſephus.

XVI. (p. 255.) Mark viii. 3, 4. "The Phariſees and all the Jews, except they waſh, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and many other things there be which they have received to hold."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 13. c. 10. ſec. 6. "The Phariſees have delivered to the people many inſtitutions, as received from the fathers, which are not written in the law of Moſes."

XVII. (p. 259.) Acts xxiii. 8. "For the Sadducees ſay, that there is no reſurrection, neither angel nor ſpirit, but the phariſees confeſs both."

Joſ. de Bell. lib. 2. c. 8. ſec. 14. They (the Phariſees) believe every ſoul to be immortal, but that the ſoul of the good only paſſes into another body, and the ſoul of the wicked is puniſhed with eternal puniſhment." On the other hand, Ant. lib. 18. c. 1. ſec. 4. "It is the opinion of the Sadducees that ſouls periſh with the bodies."

XVIII. (p. 268.) Acts v. 17. "Then the high-prieſt roſe up, and all they that were with him, which is the ſect of the Sadducees, and were filled with indignation." St. Luke here intimates that the high-prieſt was a Sadducee, which is a character one would not have expected to meet with in that ſtation. This circumſtance, remarkable as it is, was not however without examples.

Joſ. Ant. lib. 13. c. 10. ſec. 6, 7. "John Hyrcanus high-prieſt of the Jews, forſook the Phariſees upon diſguſt, and joined himſelf to the party of the Sadducees." This high-prieſt died one hundred and ſeven years before the Chriſtian era.

Again, (Ant. lib. 20. c. 8. ſec. 1.) "This Ananus the younger, who, as we have ſaid juſt now, had received the high-prieſthood, was fierce and haughty in his behaviour, and above all men bold and daring; and moreover *was of the ſect of the Sadducees.*" This high-prieſt lived little more than twenty years after the tranſaction in the Acts.

XIX. (p. 282.) Luke ix. 51. "And it came to paſs when the time was come, that he ſhould be received up, he ſtedfaſtly ſet his face to go to Jeruſalem, and ſent meſſengers before his

face. And they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him, and they did not receive him, becauſe his face was as though he would go to Jeruſalem."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 20. c. 5. ſec. 1. "It was the cuſtom of the Galileans, who went up to the holy city at the feaſts, to travel through the country of Samaria. As they were in their journey, ſome inhabitants of the village called Ginæa, which lies on the borders of Samaria and the great plain, falling upon them, killed a great many of them."

XX. (p. 278.) John iv. 20. "Our fathers," ſaid the Samaritan woman, "worſhipped in *this mountain*, and ye ſay, that Jeruſalem is the place where men ought to worſhip."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 18. c. 5. ſec. 1. "Commanding them to meet him at *Mount Gerizim*, which is by them (the Samaritans) eſteemed the moſt ſacred of all mountains.

XXI. (p. 312.) Mat. xxvi. 3. "Then aſſembled together the chief prieſts, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high prieſt, *who was called Caiaphas*." That Caiaphas was high-prieſt, and high-prieſt throughout the preſidentſhip of Pontius Pilate, and conſequently at this time, appears from the following account:—He was made high-prieſt by Valerius Gratus, *predeceſſor* of Pontius Pilate, and was removed from his office by Vitellius, preſident of Syria, *after* Pilate was ſent away out of the province of Judea. Joſephus relates the *advancement* of Caiaphas to the high-prieſthood in this manner: "Gratus gave the high-prieſthood to Simon, the ſon of Camithus. He having enjoyed this honour not above a year, was ſucceeded by Joſeph, *who is alſo called Caiaphas*.[a] After this Gratus went away for Rome, having been eleven years in Judea; and *Pontius Pilate came thither as his ſucceſſor*." Of the *removal* of Caiaphas from his office, Joſephus likewiſe afterward informs us; and connects it with a circumſtance, which fixes the time to a date ſubſequent to the determination of Pilate's government. "Vitellius (he tells us) ordered *Pilate to repair to Rome*; and *after that* went up himſelf to Jeruſalem, and then gave directions concerning ſeveral matters. And, having done theſe things, he took away the prieſthood from the *high-prieſt* Joſeph, who is called *Caiaphas*."[b]

XXII. (Michaelis, c. 11. ſec. 11.) Acts xxiii. 4. "And they that ſtood by ſaid, Revileſt thou God's high-prieſt? Then

[a] Ant. lib. 18. c. 2. ſec. 2. [b] Ant. lib. 18. c. 5. ſec. 3.

ſaid Paul, I wiſt not, brethren, that he was high-prieſt." Now, upon inquiry into the hiſtory of the age, it turns out, that Ananias, of whom this is ſpoken, was, in truth, not the high-prieſt, though he was ſitting in judgment in that aſſumed capacity. The caſe was, that he had formerly held the office, and had been depoſed; that the perſon who ſucceeded him had been murdered; that another was not yet appointed to the ſtation; and that, during the vacancy, he had of his own authority, taken upon himſelf the diſcharge of the office.[a] This ſingular ſituation of the high-prieſthood took place during the interval between the death of Jonathan, who was murdered by order of Felix, and the acceſſion of Iſmael, who was inveſted with the high-prieſthood by Agrippa; and preciſely in this interval it happened, that St. Paul was apprehended, and brought before the Jewiſh council.

XXIII. (p. 323) Mat. xxvi. 59. "Now the *chief prieſts* and elders, and all the council, ſought falſe witneſs againſt him."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 18. c. 15. ſec. 3, 4. "Then might be ſeen the *high-prieſts themſelves*, with aſhes on their heads, and their breaſts naked."

The agreement here conſiſts in ſpeaking of the high-prieſts, or chief prieſts (for the name in the original is the ſame) in the *plural number*, when in ſtrictneſs there was only *one* high-prieſt: which may be conſidered as a proof, that the evangeliſts were habituated to the manner of ſpeaking then in uſe, becauſe they retain it, when it is neither accurate nor juſt. For the ſake of brevity I have put down from Joſephus, only a ſingle example of the application of this title in the plural number; but it is his uſual ſtyle.

Ib. (p. 871.) Luke iii. 1. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæſar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, *Annas and Caiaphas being high-prieſts*, the word of God came unto John." There is a paſſage in Joſephus very nearly parallel to this, and which may at leaſt ſerve to vindicate the evangeliſt from objection, with reſpect to his giving the title of high-prieſt to two perſons at the ſame time: "Quadratus ſent two others of the moſt powerful men of the Jews, as alſo the *high-prieſts Jonathan and Ananias*."[b] That Annas was a perſon in an eminent ſtation, and

[a] Joſ. Ant. l. xx. c. 5. ſec. 2. c. vi. ſec. 2. c. 9. ſec. 2.

[b] De Bell. lib. 11. c. 12. ſec. 6.

poſſeſſed an authority co-ordinate with, or next to that of the high-prieſts properly ſo called, may be inferred from St. John's goſpel, which, in the hiſtory of Chriſt's crucifixion, relates that "the ſoldiers led him away to Annas firſt."[a] And this might be noticed as an example of undeſigned coincidence in the two evangeliſts.

Again, (p. 870.) Acts iv. 6. Annas is called the high-prieſt, though Caiaphas was in the office of the high-prieſthood. In like manner in Joſephus,[b] "Joſeph the ſon of Gorion, and the high-prieſt Ananus were choſen to be ſupreme governors of all things in the city." Yet Ananus, though here called the high-prieſt Ananus, was not then in the office of the high prieſthood. The truth is, there is an indeterminateneſs in the uſe of this title in the goſpel; ſometimes it is applied excluſively to the perſon who held the office at the time, ſometimes to one or two more, who probably ſhared with him ſome of the powers or functions of the office; and, ſometimes, to ſuch of the prieſts as were eminent by their ſtation or character; and there is the very ſame indeterminateneſs in Joſephus.

XXIV. (p. 347.) John xix. 19, 20. "And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the croſs." That ſuch was the cuſtom of the Romans upon theſe occaſions, appears from paſſages of Suetonius and Dio Caſſius: "Patrem familias—canibus objecit, cum hoc *titulo* impie locutus parmularius." Suet. Domit. cap. 10. And in Dio Caſſius we have the following: "Having led him through the midſt of the court or aſſembly, *with a writing ſignifying the cauſe of his death*, and afterwards crucifying him." Book 54.

Ib. "And it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." That it was alſo uſual, about this time, in Jeruſalem, to ſet up advertiſements in *different* languages, is gathered from the account which Joſephus gives, of an expoſtulatory meſſage from Titus to the Jews, when the city was almoſt in his hands; in which he ſays, Did ye not erect pillars with inſcriptions on them, *in the Greek and in our language*, "Let no one paſs beyond theſe bounds?"

XXV. (p. 352.) Mat. xxvii. 26. "When he had *ſcourged* Jeſus, he delivered him to be crucified."

The following paſſages occur in Joſephus:

[a] xviii. 13. [b] De Bell. 2. c. 20. ſec. 3.

" Being *beaten*, they were crucified oppoſite to the citadel." [a]
" Whom, having *firſt ſcourged with whips*, he crucified."[b]
" He was burnt alive, *having been firſt beaten*."[c]

To which may be added one from Livy, lib. 11. c. 5. " Productique omnes, *virgiſque cæſi*, ac ſecuri percuſſi."

A modern example may illuſtrate the uſe we make of this inſtance. The preceding of a capital execution by the corporal puniſhment of the ſufferer, is a practice unknown in England, but retained, in ſome inſtances at leaſt, as appears by the late execution of a regicide, in Sweden. This circumſtance, therefore, in the account of an Engliſh execution purporting to come from an Engliſh writer, would not only bring a ſuſpicion upon the truth of the account, but would, in a conſiderable degree, impeach its pretenſions, of having been written by the author whoſe name it bore. Whereas, the ſame circumſtance, in the account of a Swediſh execution, would verify the account, and ſupport the authenticity of the book in which it was found; or, at leaſt, would prove that the author, whoever he was, poſſeſſed the information and the knowledge which he ought to poſſeſs.

XXVI. (p. 353.) John xix. 16. " And they took Jeſus, and led him away, and he, *bearing his croſs*, went forth."

Plutarch de iis qui ſero puniuntur, p. 554. A. Paris, 1624. " Every kind of wickedneſs produces its own particular torment, juſt as every malefactor, when he is brought forth to execution, *carries his own croſs*."

XXVII. John xix. 32. " Then came the ſoldiers, and *brake the legs* of the firſt, and of the other, which was crucified with him."

Conſtantine aboliſhed the puniſhment of the croſs; in commending which edict, a heathen writer notices this very circumſtance of *breaking the legs*: " Eo pius, ut etiam vetus veterrimumque ſupplicium, patibulum, et *cruribus ſuffringendis*, primus removerit." Aur. Vict. Cæſ. cap. 41.

XXVIII. (p. 457.) Acts iii. 1. " Now Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the *ninth* hour."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 15. c. 7. ſec. 8. " Twice every day, in the morning, and at the *ninth* hour, the prieſts perform their duty at the altar."

[a] Page 1247, 24 edit. Hudſ. [b] P. 1080. 45 edit.
[c] P. 1327. 43 edit.

XXIX. (p. 462.) Acts xv. 21. "For Moſes of old time, hath, in every city, them that preach him, *being read in the ſynagogues every ſabbath day.*"

Joſ. contra Ap. l. 2. "He (Moſes) gave us the law, the moſt excellent of all inſtitutions; nor did he appoint that it ſhould be heard once only, or twice, or often, but that, laying aſide all other works, we ſhould meet together *every week* to hear it *read*, and gain a perfect underſtanding of it."

XXX. (p. 465.) Acts xxi. 23. "We have four men, which have a *vow* on them; them take, and purify thyſelf with them, that they may *ſhave their heads.*"

Joſ. de Bell. l. 11. c. 15. "It is cuſtomary for thoſe who have been afflicted with ſome diſtemper, or have laboured under any other difficulties, to make a *vow* thirty days before they offer ſacrifices, to abſtain from wine, and *ſhave the hair of their heads.*"

Ib. v. 24. "Them take, and purify thyſelf with them, and *be at charges with them, that they may ſhave their heads.*"

Joſ. Ant. l. 19. c. 6. "He (Herod Agrippa) coming to Jeruſalem, offered up ſacrifices of thankſgiving, and omitted nothing that was preſcribed by the law. For which reaſon *he alſo ordered a good number of Nazarites to be ſhaved.*" We here find that it was an act of piety amongſt the Jews, to defray, for thoſe who were under the Nazaritic vow, the expenſes which attended its completion; and that the phraſe was, "that they might be ſhaved." The cuſtom and the expreſſion are both remarkable, and both in cloſe conformity with the ſcripture account.

XXXI. (p. 474.) 2 Cor. xi. 24. "Of the Jews five times received I forty ſtripes, *ſave one.*"

Joſ. Ant. iv. c. 8. ſec. 21. "He that acts contrary hereto, let him receive forty ſtripes, *wanting one*, from the public officer."

The coincidence here is ſingular, becauſe the law *allowed* forty ſtripes:—"Forty ſtripes he may give him and not exceed." Deut. xxv. 3. It proves that the author of the epiſtle to the Corinthians was guided not by books, but by facts; becauſe his ſtatement agrees with the actual cuſtom, even when that cuſtom deviated from the written law, and from what he muſt have learnt by conſulting the Jewiſh code, as ſet forth in the Old Teſtament.

XXXII. (p. 490.) Luke iii. 12. "Then came also *publicans* to be baptized." From this quotation, as well as from the history of Levi or Matthew (Luke v. 29) and of Zaccheus (Luke xix. 2.) it appears, that the publicans or tax-gatherers were, frequently at least, if not always, Jews: which, as the country was then under a Roman government, and the taxes were paid to the Romans, was a circumstance not to be expected. That it was the truth however of the case, appears from a short passage of Josephus.

De Bell. lib. ii. c. xiv. sec. 45. "But Florus not restraining these practices by his authority, the chief men of the Jews, *among whom was John the publican*, not knowing well what course to take, waited upon Florus, and gave him eight talents of silver to stop the building."

XXXIII. (p. 496.) Acts xxii. 25. "And, as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you *to scourge a man that is a Roman*, and uncondemned?

"Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum: scelus verberari, Cic. in ver."

"Cædebatur virgis, in medio foro Messanæ, civis Romanus, Judices, cum interea, nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia, istius miseri, inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum, audiebatur, nisi hæc, *civis Romanus sum*."

XXXIV. (p. 513.) Acts xxii. 27. "Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, (Paul) Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea." The circumstance here to be noticed is, that a *Jew* was a Roman citizen.

Jos. Ant. lib. 14. c. 10. sec. 13. "Lucius Lentulus, the consul, declared, I have dismissed from the service, *the Jewish Roman citizens*, who observe the rites of the Jewish religion at Ephesus."

Ib. v. 27. "And the chief captain answered, With *a great sum obtained I this freedom*."

Dio. Cassius, l. 60. "This privilege, which had been *bought formerly at a great price*, became so cheap, that it was commonly said, a man might be made a Roman citizen for a few pieces of broken glass."

XXXV. (p. 521.) Acts xxviii. 16. "And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with *a soldier that kept him*."

With which join v. 20. "For the hope of Israel I am bound with *this chain*."

"Quemadmodum eadem *catena*, et custodiam et *militem* copulat, sic ista, quæ tam dissimilia sunt, pariter incedunt." Seneca, Ep. 5.

"Proconsul æstimare solet, utrum incarcerem recipienda sit persona, an *militi tradenda*." Ulpian, l. 1. sec. de custod. et exhib. reor.

In the confinement of Agrippa by the order of Tiberius, Antonia managed, that the centurion who presided over the guards, and the *soldier to whom Agrippa was to be bound*, might be men of mild character. Jos. Ant. lib. 18. c. 7. sec. 5. After the accession of Caligula, Agrippa also, like Paul, was suffered to dwell, yet as a prisoner, in his own house.

XXXVI. (p. 531.) Acts xxvii. 1. "And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul, *and certain other prisoners*, unto one named Julius." Since not only Paul, but certain other *prisoners*, were sent by the same ship into Italy, the text must be considered, as carrying with it an intimation, that the sending of persons from Judea to be tried at Rome, was an ordinary practice. That in truth it was so, is made out by a variety of examples which the writings of Josephus furnish; and amongst others by the following, which comes near both to the time and the subject of the instance in the Acts. "Felix, for some slight offence, *bound and sent to Rome* several priests of his acquaintance, and very good and honest men, to answer for themselves to Cæsar." Jos. Invit. sec. 3.

XXXVII. (p. 539.) Acts xi. 27. "And in these days, came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch; and there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world, (or all the country) *which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar*."

Jos. Ant. l. 20. c. 4. sec. 2. "In their time (i. e. about the fifth or sixth year of Claudius) a great dearth happened in Judea."

XXXVIII. (p. 555.) Acts xviii. 1, 2. "Because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome."

Suet. Claud. c. 25. "Judæos, impulsore Chresto assidué tumultuantes, Româ expulit."

XXXIX. (p. 664.) Acts v. 37. "After this man rose up

Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him."

Joſ. de Bell. l. vii. "He (viz. the perſon, who, in another place, is called by Joſephus, Judas the Galilean, or Judas of Galilee) perſuaded not a few not to enroll themſelves, when Cyrenius the cenſor was ſent into Judea."

XL. (p. 942.) Acts xxi. 38. "Art not thou that Egyptian, which, before theſe days, madeſt an uproar, and leddeſt out into the wilderneſs four thouſand men, that were murderers."

Joſ. de Bell. l. 2. c. 13. ſec. 5. "But the Egyptian falſe prophet, brought a yet heavier diſaſter upon the Jews; for this impoſtor, coming into the country, and gaining the reputation of a prophet, gathered together thirty thouſand men, who were deceived by him. Having brought them round out of the wilderneſs, up to the Mount of Olives, he intended from thence to make his attack upon Jeruſalem; but Felix coming ſuddenly upon him with the Roman ſoldiers, prevented the attack. A great number, or (as it ſhould rather be rendered) the greateſt part of thoſe that were with him, were either ſlain, or taken priſoners."

In theſe two paſſages, the deſignation of the impoſtor, an "Egyptian," without his proper name; "the wilderneſs;" his eſcape, though his followers were deſtroyed; the time of the tranſaction, in the preſidentſhip of Felix, which could not be any long time before the words in Luke are ſuppoſed to have been ſpoken; are circumſtances of cloſe correſpondency. There is one, and only one, point of diſagreement, and that is, in the number of his followers, which in the Acts are called four thouſand, and by Joſephus thirty thouſand: but, beſide that the names of numbers, more than any other words, are liable to the errors of tranſcribers, we are, in the preſent inſtance, under the leſs concern to reconcile the evangeliſt with Joſephus, as Joſephus is not, in this point, conſiſtent with himſelf.

For, whereas, in the paſſage here quoted, he calls the number thirty thouſand, and tells us that the greateſt part, or a great number (according as his words are rendered) of thoſe that were with him, were deſtroyed; in his Antiquities, he repreſents four hundred to have been killed upon this occaſion, and two hundred taken priſoners,[a] which certainly was not

[a] Lib. 20. c. 7. ſec. 6.

the "greateſt part," nor "a great part," nor "a great number," out of thirty thouſand. It is probable alſo, that Lyſias and Joſephus ſpoke of the expedition in its different ſtages: Lyſias of thoſe who followed the Egyptian out of Jeruſalem; Joſephus of all who were collected about him afterwards, from different quarters.

XLI. (Lardner's Jewiſh and Heathen Teſtimonies, Vol. III. p. 21) Acts xvii. 22. "Then Paul ſtood in the midſt of Mars-hill, and ſaid, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too ſuperſtitious; for, as I paſſed by and beheld your devotions, *I found an altar with this inſcription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.* Whom therefore ye ignorantly worſhip, him declare I unto you."

Diogenes Laertius, who wrote about the year 210, in his hiſtory of Epimenides, who is ſuppoſed to have flouriſhed nearly ſix hundred years before Chriſt, relates of him the following ſtory: that, being invited to Athens for the purpoſe, he delivered the city from a peſtilence in this manner—"Taking ſeveral ſheep, ſome black, others white, he had them up to the Areopagus, and then let them go where they would, and gave orders to thoſe who followed them, wherever any of them ſhould lie down, to ſacrifice it to the god to whom it belonged; and ſo the plague ceaſed. Hence," ſays the hiſtorian, "it has come to paſs, *that, to this preſent time, may be found in the boroughs of the Athenians* ANONYMOUS *altars;* a memorial of the expiation then made."[a] Theſe altars, it may be preſumed, were called *anonymous*, becauſe there was not the name of any particular deity inſcribed upon them.

Pauſanias, who wrote before the end of the ſecond century, in his deſcription of Athens, having mentioned an altar of Jupiter Olympius, adds, "*and nigh unto it is an altar of unknown gods.*"[b] And, in another place, ſpeaks "*of altars of gods called unknown.*"[c]

Philoſtratus, who wrote in the beginning of the third century, records it as an obſervation of Apollonius Tyanæus, "that it was wiſe to ſpeak well of all the gods, *eſpecially at Athens, where altars of unknown demons were erected.*"[d]

The *author of the dialogue Philopatris*, by many ſuppoſed to have been Lucian, who wrote about the year 170, by others

[a] In epimenide. l. 1. ſegm. 110. [b] Pauſ. l. 5. p. 412.
[c] Ib. l. 1. p. 4. [d] Philoſ. Apoll. Tyan. l. 6. c. 3.

ſome anonymous heathen writer of the fourth century, makes Critias ſwear *by the unknown god of Athens;* and near the end of the dialogue, has theſe words, "but let us find out the *unknown god at Athens*, and, ſtretching our hands to heaven, offer to him our praiſes and thankſgivings."[a]

This is a very curious and a very important coincidence. It appears beyond controverſy, that altars with this inſcription were exiſting at Athens, at the time when St. Paul is alleged to have been there. It ſeems alſo, which is very worthy of obſervation, that this inſcription was *peculiar* to the Athenians. There is no evidence that there were altars inſcribed "to the unknown god" in any other country. Suppoſing the hiſtory of St. Paul to have been a fable, how is it poſſible that ſuch a writer as the author of the Acts of the apoſtles was, ſhould hit upon a circumſtance ſo extraordinary, and introduce it, by an alluſion ſo ſuitable to St. Paul's office and character.

The examples here collected, will be ſufficient, I hope, to ſatisfy us, that the writers of the Chriſtian hiſtory knew ſomething of what they were writing about. The argument is alſo ſtrengthened by the following conſiderations:

I. That theſe agreements appear, not only in articles of public hiſtory, but, ſometimes, in minute, recondite, and very peculiar circumſtances, in which, of all others, a forger is moſt likely to have been found tripping.

II. That the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which took place forty years after the commencement of the Chriſtian inſtitution, produced ſuch a change in the ſtate of the country, and the condition of the Jews, that a writer who was unacquainted with the circumſtances of the nation *before* that event, would find it difficult to avoid miſtakes, in endeavouring to give detailed accounts of tranſactions connected with thoſe circumſtances, foraſmuch as he could no longer have a living exemplar to copy from.

III. That there appears, in the writers of the New Teſtament, a knowledge of the affairs of thoſe times, which we do not find in authors of later ages. In particular, many of the Chriſtian writers of the ſecond and third centuries, and of the following ages, had falſe notions concerning the ſtate of Judea, between the nativity of Jeſus and the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.[b] Therefore *they* could not have compoſed our hiſtories.

[a] Lucian in Philop. tom. 2. Græv. p. 767, 780.
[b] Lard. part I. vol. II. p. 960.

Amidſt ſo many conformities, we are not to wonder that we meet with ſome difficulties. The principal of theſe I will put down, together with the ſolutions which they have received. But in doing this I muſt be contented with a brevity, better ſuited to the limits of my volume, than to the nature of a controverſial argument. For the hiſtorical proofs of my aſſertions, and for the Greek criticiſms upon which ſome of them are founded, I refer the reader to the ſecond volume of the firſt part of Dr. Lardner's large work.

I. The taxing, during which Jeſus was born, was "firſt made," as we read, according to our tranſlation, in St. Luke, "whilſt Cyrenius was governor of Syria."[a] Now it turns out that Cyrenius was not governor of Syria until twelve, or, at the ſooneſt, ten years, after the birth of Chriſt; and that a taxing, cenſus, or aſſeſſment, was made in Judea in the beginning of his government. The charge, therefore, brought againſt the evangeliſt is, that, intending to refer to this taxing, he has miſplaced the date of it, by an error of ten or twelve years.

The anſwer to the accuſation is found in his uſing the word "firſt"—"And this taxing was *firſt* made;" for, according to the miſtake imputed to the evangeliſt, this word could have no ſignification whatever. It could have had no place in his narrative, becauſe, let it relate to what it will, taxing, cenſus, enrollment, or aſſeſſment, it imports that the writer had more than one of theſe in contemplation. It acquits him therefore of the charge, it is inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition, of his knowing only of the taxing in the beginning of Cyrenius's government. And if the evangeliſt knew, which this word proves that he did, of ſome other taxing beſide that, it is too much for the ſake of convicting him of a miſtake, to lay it down as certain, that he intended to refer to *that*.

The ſentence in St. Luke may be conſtrued thus: "This was the firſt aſſeſſment (or enrollment) of Cyrenius, governor of Syria;"[b] the words "governor of Syria" being uſed after the

[a] C. ii. v. 2.

[b] If the word which we render "firſt" be rendered "before," which it has been ſtrongly contended that the Greek idiom allows of, the whole difficulty vaniſhes, for then the paſſage would be—"now this taxing was made before Cyrenius was governor of Syria;" which cor-

name of Cyrenius as his addition or title. And this title, belonging to him at the time of writing the account, was naturally enough subjoined to his name, though acquired after the transaction, which the account describes. A modern writer, who was not very exact in the choice of his expressions, in relating the affairs of the East-Indies, might easily say, that such a thing was done by *governor* Hastings, though, in truth, the thing had been done by him before his advancement to the station from which he received the name of governor. And this, as we contend, is precisely the inaccuracy which has produced the difficulty in St. Luke.

At any rate, it appears from the form of the expression, that he had two taxings or enrollment in contemplation. And if Cyrenius had been sent upon this business into Judea, before he became governor of Syria, (against which supposition there is no proof, but rather external evidence of an enrollment going on about this time under some person or other[a]) then the census on all hands acknowledged to have been made by him in the beginning of his government, would form a second, so as to occasion the other to be called the *first*.

II. Another chronological objection arises upon a date assigned in the beginning of the third chapter of St. Luke;[b] "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar—Jesus *began to be about thirty* years of age;" for supposing Jesus to have been born, as St. Matthew, and St. Luke also himself, relates, in the time of Herod, he must, according to the dates given in Josephus, and by the Roman historians, have been at least thirty-one years of age in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. If he was born, as St. Matthew's narrative intimates, one or two years before Herod's death, he would have been thirty-two or thirty-three years old, at that time.

responds with the chronology. But I rather choose to argue, that, however the word "first" be rendered, to give it a meaning at all, it militates with the objection. In this I think there can be no mistake.

a Josephus (Ant. 17. c. 2. sec. 6.) has this remarkable passage—"When therefore the whole Jewish nation took an oath to be faithful to Cæsar, and the interests of the king." This transaction corresponds in the course of the history with the time of Christ's birth. What is called a census, and which we render taxing, was delivering upon oath an account of their property. This might be accompanied with an oath of fidelity, or might be mistaken by Josephus for it.

b Lard. part I. vol. II. p. 768.

This is the difficulty: the solution turns upon an alteration in the construction of the Greek. St. Luke's words in the original are allowed, by the general opinion of learned men, to signify, not "that Jesus began to be about thirty years of age," but "that he was about thirty years of age when he began his ministry." This construction being admitted, the adverb "about" gives us all the latitude we want, and more; especially when applied, as it is in the present instance, to a decimal number; for such numbers, even without this qualifying addition, are often used in a laxer sense than is here contended for.[a]

III. Acts v. 36. "For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves; who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought."

Josephus has preserved the account of an impostor, of the name of Theudas, who created some disturbances, and was slain; but, according to the date assigned to this man's appearance, (in which, however, it is very possible that Josephus may have been mistaken[b]) it must have been, at the least, seven years after Gamaliel's speech, of which this text is a part, was delivered. It has been replied to the objection,[c] that there might be two impostors of this name; and it has been observed, in order to give a general probability to the solution, that the same thing appears to have happened in other instances of the same kind. It is proved from Josephus, that there were not fewer than four persons of the name of Simon, within forty years, and not fewer than three, of the name of Judas, within ten years, who were all leaders of insurrections: and it is likewise recorded by this historian, that, upon the death of Herod the Great, (which agrees very well with the time of the commo-

[a] Livy, speaking of the peace, which the conduct of Romulus had procured to the State, during the *whole* reign of his successor* (Numa,) has these words—"Ab illo enim profectis viribus datis tantum valuit, ut, in *quadraginta* deinde annos, tutam pacem haberet:" yet, afterwards, in the same chapter, "Romulus (he says) septem et triginta regnavit annos, Numa tres et quadraginta."

[b] Michaelis's Introduction to the New Test. (Marsh's Translation) vol. I. p. 61.

[c] Lardner, part I. vol. II. p. 922.

* *Liv. Hist. c.* 1. *sec.* 16.

tion referred to by Gamaliel, and with his manner of ſtating that time "before theſe days") there were innumerable diſturbances in Judea.[a] Archbiſhop Uſher was of opinion, that one of the three Judas's above mentioned was Gamaliel's Theudas;[b] and that, with a leſs variation of the name than we actually find in the goſpels, where one of the twelve apoſtles is called by Luke, Judas, and by Mark, Thaddeus.[c] Origen, however he came at his information, appears to have believed, that there was an impoſtor of the name of Theudas before the nativity of Chriſt.[d]

IV. Mat. xxiii. 34. "Wherefore, behold, I ſend unto you prophets, and wiſe men, and ſcribes: and ſome of them ye ſhall kill and crucify; and ſome of them ſhall ye ſcourge in your ſynagogues, and perſecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood ſhed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of *Zacharias, ſon of Barachias, whom ye ſlew between the temple and the altar.*"

There is a Zacharias, whoſe death is related in the ſecond book of Chronicles, in a manner which perfectly ſupports our Saviour's alluſion.[e] But this Zacharias was the ſon of *Jehoiada.*

There is alſo Zacharias the prophet; who was the ſon of Barachiah, and is ſo deſcribed in the ſuperſcription of his prophecy, but of whoſe death we have no account.

I have little doubt, but that the firſt Zacharias was the perſon ſpoken of by our Saviour; and that the name of the father has been ſince added, or changed, by ſome one, who took it from the title of the prophecy, which happened to be better known to him than the hiſtory in the Chronicles.

There is likewiſe a Zacharias, the ſon of Baruch, related by Joſephus to have been ſlain in the temple, a few years before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. It has been inſinuated, that the words put into our Saviour's mouth, contain a reference to this tranſaction, and were compoſed by ſome writer, who either

a Ant. l. 17. c. 12. ſec. 4. b Annals, p. 797.
c Luke vi. 16. Mark iii. 18. d Or. Con. Celſ. p. 44.

e "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the ſon of Jehoiada the prieſt, which ſtood above the people, and ſaid unto them, Thus ſaith God, why tranſgreſs ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot proſper? Becauſe ye have forſaken the Lord, he hath alſo forſaken you. And they conſpired againſt him, *and ſtoned him with ſtones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the houſe of the Lord.*" 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.

confounded the time of the tranſaction with our Saviour's age, or inadvertently overlooked the anachroniſm.

Now ſuppoſe it to have been ſo; ſuppoſe theſe words to have been ſuggeſted by the tranſaction related in Joſephus, and to have been falſely aſcribed to Chriſt; and obſerve what extraordinary coincidences (accidentally, as it muſt in that caſe have been) attend the forger's miſtake.

Firſt, that we have a Zacharias in the book of Chronicles, whoſe death, and the manner of it, correſponds with the alluſion.

Secondly, that although the name of this perſon's father be erroneouſly put down in the goſpel, yet we have a way of accounting for the error, by ſhowing another Zacharias in the Jewiſh ſcriptures, much better known than the former, whoſe patronymic was actually that which appears in the text.

Every one, who thinks upon the ſubject, will find theſe to be circumſtances, which could not have met together in a miſtake, which did not proceed from the circumſtances themſelves.

I have noticed, I think, all the difficulties of this kind. They are few; ſome of them admit of a clear, others of a probable ſolution. The reader will compare them with the number, the variety, the cloſeneſs, and the ſatisfactorineſs of the inſtances which are to be ſet againſt them; and he will remember the ſcantineſs, in many caſes, of our intelligence, and that difficulties always attend imperfect information.

CHAP. VII.

Undeſigned Coincidences.

BETWEEN the letters which bear the name of St. Paul in our collection, and his hiſtory in the Acts of the apoſtles, there exiſt many notes of correſpondency. The ſimple peruſal of the writings is ſufficient to prove, that neither the hiſtory was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the hiſtory. And the *undeſignedneſs* of the agreements, which undeſignedneſs is gathered from their latency, their minuteneſs, their obliquity, the ſuitableneſs of the circumſtances in which they conſiſt, to the places in which theſe circumſtances occur, and the circuitous references by which they are traced out, demonſtrates

that they have not been produced by meditation, or by any fraudulent contrivance. But coincidences, from which these causes are excluded, and which are too close and numerous to be accounted for by accidental concurrences of fiction, must necessarily have truth for their foundation.

This argument appeared to my mind of so much value (especially for its assuming nothing beside the existence of the books) that I have pursued it through St. Paul's thirteen epistles, in a work published by me four years ago under the title of Horæ Paulinæ. I am sensible how feebly any argument, which depends upon an induction of particulars, is represented without examples. On which account, I wished to have abridged my own volume, in the manner in which I have treated Dr. Lardner's in the preceding chapter. But, upon making the attempt, I did not find it in my power to render the articles intelligible by fewer words than I have there used. I must be content, therefore, to refer the reader to the work itself. And I would particularly invite his attention to the observations which are made in it upon the three first epistles. I persuade myself that he will find the proofs, both of agreement and undesignedness, supplied by these epistles, sufficient to support the conclusion which is there maintained, in favour both of the genuineness of the writings, and the truth of the narrative.

It remains only, in this place, to point out how the argument bears upon the general question of the Christian history.

First, St. Paul in these letters affirms, in unequivocal terms, his own performance of miracles, and, what ought particularly to be remembered, "*that miracles were the signs of an apostle.*"[a] If this testimony come from St. Paul's own hand, it is invaluable. And that it does so, the argument before us fixes in my mind a firm assurance.

Secondly, it shows that the series of action, represented in the epistles of St. Paul, was real; which alone lays a foundation for the proposition, which forms the subject of the first part of our present work, viz. that the original witnesses of the Christian history devoted themselves to lives of toil, suffering, and danger, in consequence of their belief of the truth of that history, and for the sake of communicating the knowledge of it to others.

[a] Rom. xv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 12.

Thirdly, it proves that Luke, or whoever was the author of the Acts of the apoſtles (for the argument does not depend upon the name of the author, though I know no reaſon for queſtioning it) was well acquainted with St. Paul's hiſtory; and that he probably was, what he profeſſes himſelf to be, a companion of St. Paul's travels: which, if true, eſtabliſhes, in a conſiderable degree, the credit even of his goſpel, becauſe it ſhows that the writer, from his time, ſituation, and connexions, poſſeſſed opportunities of informing himſelf truly concerning the tranſactions which he relates. I have little difficulty in applying to the goſpel of St. Luke what is proved concerning the Acts of the apoſtles, conſidering them as two parts of the ſame hiſtory; for, though there are inſtances of *ſecond* parts being forgeries, I know none where the ſecond part is genuine, and the firſt not ſo.

I will only obſerve, as the ſequel of the argument, though not noticed in my work, the remarkable ſimilitude between the ſtyle of St. John's goſpel, and of St. John's firſt epiſtle. The ſtyle of St. John's is not at all the ſtyle of St. Paul's epiſtles, though both are very ſingular; nor is it the ſtyle of St. James's or of St. Peter's epiſtle; but it bears a reſemblance to the ſtyle of the goſpel inſcribed with St. John's name, ſo far as that reſemblance can be expected to appear, which is not in ſimple narrative, ſo much as in reflections, and in repreſentation of diſcourſes. Writings, ſo circumſtanced, prove themſelves, and one another, to be genuine. This correſpondency is the more valuable, as the epiſtle itſelf aſſerts, in St. John's manner indeed, but in terms ſufficiently explicit, the writer's perſonal knowledge of Chriſt's hiſtory: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you."[a] Who would not deſire, who perceives not the value of an account, delivered by a writer ſo well informed as this?

[a] C. i. v. 1, 3.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Hiſtory of the Reſurrection.

THE hiſtory of the reſurrection of Chriſt is a part of the evidence of Chriſtianity; but I do not know, whether the proper ſtrength of this paſſage of the Chriſtian hiſtory, or wherein its peculiar value as a head of evidence, conſiſts, be generally underſtood. It is not that, as a miracle, the reſurrection ought to be accounted a more deciſive proof of ſupernatural agency than other miracles are; it is not that, as it ſtands in the goſpels it is better atteſted than ſome others; it is not, for either of theſe reaſons, that more weight belongs to it than to other miracles, but for the following, viz. that it is completely certain, that the apoſtles of Chriſt, and the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, aſſerted the fact. And this would have been certain, if the four goſpels had been loſt, or never written. Every piece of ſcripture recognizes the reſurrection. Every epiſtle of every apoſtle, every author contemporary with the apoſtles, of the age immediately ſucceeding the apoſtles, every writing from that age to the preſent, genuine or ſpurious, on the ſide of Chriſtianity or againſt it, concur in repreſenting the reſurrection of Chriſt as an article of his hiſtory, received without doubt or diſagreement by all who called themſelves Chriſtians, as alleged from the beginning by the propagators of the inſtitution, and alleged as the centre of their teſtimony. Nothing, I apprehend, which a man does not himſelf ſee or hear, can be more certain to him than this point. I do not mean that nothing can be more certain than that Chriſt roſe from the dead; but that nothing can be more certain, than that his apoſtles, and the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, gave out that he did ſo. In the other parts of the goſpel narrative, a queſtion may be made, whether the things, related of Chriſt, be the very things which the apoſtles and firſt teachers of the religion delivered concerning him. And this queſtion depends a good deal upon the evidence we poſſeſs of the genuineneſs, or rather, perhaps, of the antiquity, credit, and reception of the books. Upon the ſubject of the reſurrection no ſuch diſcuſſion is neceſſary, becauſe no ſuch doubt can be entertained. The only points, which can enter into our conſideration, are, whether the apoſtles knowingly publiſhed a falſehood, or whether they were themſelves deceived: whether either of theſe ſuppoſitions be poſſible. The firſt, I think,

is pretty generally given up. The nature of the undertaking, and of the men; the extreme unlikelihood that such men should engage in such a measure as a *scheme;* their personal toils and dangers and sufferings in the cause; their appropriation of their whole time to the object; the warm and seemingly unaffected zeal and earnestness with which they profess their sincerity, exempt their memory from the suspicion of imposture. The solution more deserving of notice, is that which would resolve the conduct of the apostles into *enthusiasm;* which would class the evidence of Christ's resurrection with the numerous stories that are extant of the apparitions of dead men. There are circumstances in the narrative, as it is preserved in our histories, which destroy this comparison entirely. It was not one person, but many, who saw him; they saw him not only separately, but together, not only by night but by day, not at a distance but near, not once but several times; they not only saw him, but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, examined his person to satisfy their doubts. These particulars are decisive: but they stand, I do admit, upon the credit of our records. I would answer, therefore, the insinuation of enthusiasm, by a circumstance which arises out of the nature of the thing, and the reality of which must be confessed by all, who allow, what I believe is not denied, that the resurrection of Christ, whether true or false, was asserted by his disciples from the beginning; and that circumstance is the non-production of the dead body. It is related in the history, what indeed the story of the resurrection necessarily implies, that the corpse was missing out of the sepulchre: it is related also in the history, that the Jews reported that the followers of Christ had stolen it away.[a] And this account, though loaded with great improbabilities, such as the situation of the disciples, their fears for their own safety at the time, the unlikelihood of

a "And this saying," St. Matthew writes, "is commonly reported amongst the Jews until this day." (xxviii. 15.) The evangelist may be thought good authority as to this point, even by those who do not admit his evidence in every other point; and this point is sufficient to prove that the body was missing.

It has also been rightly, I think, observed by Dr. Townsend, (Dis. upon the Res. p. 126) that the story of the guards carried collusion upon the face of it:—"His disciples came by night, and stole him away, while we slept." Men in their circumstances would not have made such an acknowledgment of their negligence, without previous assurances of protection and impunity.

their expecting to ſucceed, the difficulty of actual ſucceſs,[a] and the inevitable conſequence of detection and failure, was nevertheleſs the moſt credible account that could be given of the matter. But it proceeds entirely upon the ſuppoſition of fraud, as all the old objections did. What account can be given of the *body*, upon the ſuppoſition of enthuſiaſm? It is impoſſible our Lord's followers could believe that he was riſen from the dead, if his corpſe was lying before them. No enthuſiaſm ever reached to ſuch a pitch of extravagancy as that: a ſpirit may be an illuſion, a body is a real thing; an object of ſenſe, in which there can be no miſtake. All accounts of ſpectres leave the body in the grave. And, although the body of Chriſt might be removed by *fraud*, and for the purpoſes of fraud, yet, without any ſuch intention, and by ſincere but deluded men, which is the repreſentation of the apoſtolic character we are now examining, no ſuch attempt could be made. The preſence and the abſence of the dead body are alike inconſiſtent with the hypotheſis of enthuſiaſm; for if preſent, it muſt have cured their enthuſiaſm at once; if abſent, fraud, not enthuſiaſm, muſt have carried it away.

But further, if we admit upon the current teſtimony of all the hiſtories ſo much of the account as ſtates that the religion of Jeſus was ſet up at Jeruſalem, and ſet up with aſſerting, in the very place in which he had been buried, and a few days after he had been buried, his reſurrection out of the grave, it is evident that if his body could have been found, the Jews would have produced it as the ſhorteſt and completeſt anſwer poſſible to the whole ſtory. The attempt of the apoſtles could not have ſurvived this refutation a moment. If we alſo admit, upon the authority of St. Matthew, that the Jews were adverti ſed of the expectation of Chriſt's followers, and that they had taken due precaution in conſequence of this notice, and that the body was in marked and public cuſtody, the obſervation receives more force ſtill. For, notwithſtanding their precaution, and although thus prepared and forewarned; when the ſtory of the reſurrection came forth, as it immediately did; when it was publickly aſſerted by his diſciples, and made the ground and baſis of their preaching in his name, and collecting follow-

a "Eſpecially at the full moon, the city full of people, many probably paſſing the whole night, as Jeſus and his diſciples had done, in the open air, the ſepulchre ſo near the city as to be now incloſed within the walls." Prieſtly on the Reſur. p. 24.

ers to his religion, the Jews had not the body to produce: but were obliged to meet the teſtimony of the apoſtles by an anſwer, not containing indeed any impoſſibility in itſelf, but abſolutely inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of their integrity; that is, in other words, inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition, which would reſolve their conduct into enthuſiaſm.

CHAP. IX.

The Propagation of Chriſtianity.

IN this argument, the firſt conſideration is the fact; in what degree, within what time, and to what extent, Chriſtianity actually was propagated.

The accounts of the matter, which can be collected from our books, are as follows: A *few days* after Chriſt's diſappearance out of the world, we find an aſſembly of diſciples at Jeruſalem, to the number of "about one hundred and twenty;" [a] which hundred and twenty were, probably, a little aſſociation of believers, met together, not merely as believers in Chriſt, but as perſonally connected with the apoſtles, and with one another. Whatever was the number of believers then in Jeruſalem, we have no reaſon to be ſurpriſed that ſo ſmall a company ſhould aſſemble; for there is no proof that the followers of Chriſt were yet formed into a ſociety, that the ſociety was reduced into any order, that it was at this time even underſtood that a new religion (in the ſenſe which that term conveys to us) was to be ſet up in the world, or how the profeſſors of that religion were to be diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of mankind. The death of Chriſt had left, we may ſuppoſe, the generality of his diſciples in great doubt, both as to what they were to do, and concerning what was to follow.

This meeting was held, as we have already ſaid, a few days after Chriſt's aſcenſion; for ten days after that event was the day of Pentecoſt, when, as our hiſtory relates, [b] upon a ſignal diſplay of divine agency attending the perſons of the apoſtles, there were added to the ſociety "about three thouſand ſouls." [c] But here, it is not, I think, to be taken, that theſe three thouſand were all converted by this ſingle miracle; but rather that

[a] Acts i. 5. [b] Acts ii. 1. [c] Ib. ii. 41.

many, who were, before believers in Chriſt, became now profeſſors of Chriſtianity; that is to ſay, when they found that a religion was to be eſtabliſhed, a ſociety formed and ſet up in the name of Chriſt, governed by his laws, avowing the belief in his miſſion, united amongſt themſelves and ſeparated from the reſt of the world by viſible diſtinctions, in purſuance of their former conviction, and by virtue of what they had heard and ſeen and known of Chriſt's hiſtory, they publickly became members of it.

We read in the fourth[a] chapter of the Acts, that ſoon after this, "the number of the men," i. e. of the ſociety openly profeſſing their belief in Chriſt, "was about five thouſand." So that here is an increaſe of two thouſand within a very ſhort time. And it is probable that there were many, both now and afterwards, who, although they believed in Chriſt, did not think it neceſſary to join themſelves to this ſociety; or who waited to ſee what was likely to become of it. Gamaliel, whoſe advice to the Jewiſh council is recorded Acts iv. 34. appears to have been of this deſcription; perhaps Nicodemus, and perhaps alſo Joſeph of Arimathea. This claſs of men, their character and their rank, are likewiſe pointed out by St. John, in the twelfth chapter of his goſpel, "nevertheleſs among the chief rulers alſo many believed on him; but becauſe of the Phariſees they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the ſynagogue: for they loved the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God." Perſons ſuch as theſe, might admit the miracles of Chriſt, without being immediately convinced that they were under obligation to make a public profeſſion of Chriſtianity, at the riſk of all that was dear to them in life, and even of life itſelf.[b]

[a] Verſe 4.

[b] "Beſide thoſe who profeſſed, and thoſe who rejected and oppoſed Chriſtianity, there were, in all probability, multitudes between both, neither perfect Chriſtians, nor yet unbelievers. They had a favourable opinion of the goſpel, but worldly conſiderations made them unwilling to own it. There were many circumſtances which inclined them to think that Chriſtianity was a divine revelation, but there were many inconveniences which attended the open profeſſion of it; and they could not find in themſelves courage enough to bear them, to diſoblige their friends and family, to ruin their fortunes, to loſe their reputation, their liberty and their life, for the ſake of the new religion. Therefore they were willing to hope, that if they endeav-

Christianity, however, proceeded to increase in Jerusalem by a progress equally rapid with its first success; for, in the next[a] chapter of our history, we read that "believers were the more added to the Lord, *multitudes* both of men and women." And this enlargement of the new society appears in the first verse of the succeeding chapter, wherein we are told, that, "when the number of the disciples was *multiplied*, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected;"[b] and, afterwards in the same chapter, it is declared expressly, that "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

This I call the first period in the propagation of Christianity. It commences with the ascension of Christ; and extends, as may be collected from incidental notes of time,[c] to something more than one year after that event. During which term the preaching of Christianity, so far as our documents inform us, was confined to the single city of Jerusalem. And how did it succeed there? The first assembly which we meet with of Christ's disciples, and that a few days after his removal from the world, consisted of "one hundred and twenty." About a week after this "three thousands were added" in one day; and the number of Christians, publickly baptized, and publickly associating together, were very soon increased to "five thousands." "Multitudes both of men and women continued to be added:" "disciples multiplied greatly," and "many of the Jewish priesthood, as well as others, became obedient to the faith;" and this within a space of less than two years from the commencement of the institution.

By reason of a persecution raised against the church at Jerusalem, the converts were driven from that city, and dispersed throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.[d] Wherever they

oured to observe the great precepts of morality, which Christ had represented as the principal part, the sum and substance of religion; if they thought honourably of the gospel, if they offered no injury to the Christians, if they did them all the services that they could *safely* perform, they were willing to hope that God would accept this, and that he would excuse and forgive the rest." Jortin's Dis. on the Christ. Rel. p. 91. ed. 4.

[a] Ib. v. 14. [b] Ib. vi. 1.

[c] Vide Pearson's Anticq. l. xviii. c. 7. Benson's Hist. of Christ. book i. p. 148. [d] Ib. viii. 1.

came, they brought their religion with them; for our historian informs us,[a] that, "they that were scattered abroad, went every where, preaching the word." The effect of this preaching comes afterwards to be noticed, where the historian is led, in the course of his narrative, to observe, that *then*, (i. e. about three years[b] posterior to this) "the churches had rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." This was the work of the second period, which comprises about four years.

Hitherto the preaching of the gospel had been confined to Jews, to Jewish proselytes, and to Samaritans. And I cannot forbear from setting down, in this place, an observation of Mr. Bryant's, which appears to me to be perfectly well founded:—"The Jews still remain, but how seldom is it that we can make a single proselyte! There is reason to think, that there were more converted by the apostles in one day, than have since been won over in the last thousand years."[c]

It was not yet known to the apostles, that they were at liberty to propose the religion to mankind at large. That "mystery," as St. Paul calls it,[d] and as it then was, was revealed to Peter by an especial miracle. It appears to have been[e] about seven years after Christ's ascension, that the gospel was preached to the Gentiles of Cesarea. A year after this, a great multitude of Gentiles were converted at Antioch in Syria. The expressions employed by the historian are these—"a great number believed and turned to the Lord;" "much people was added to the Lord;" "the apostles Barnabas and Paul taught much people."[f] Upon Herod's death, which happened in the next year,[g] it is observed, that "the word of God grew and multiplied."[h] Three years from this time, upon the preaching of Paul at Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, "a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed;"[i] and afterwards, in the course of this very progress, he is represented as "making many disciples" at Derbe, a principal city in the same district. Three years[k] after this, which brings us to sixteen after the as-

[a] Ver. 4. [b] Benson, b. I. p. 207.
[c] Bryant on the truth of the Christian Religion, p. 112.
[d] Ephes. iii. 3—6. [e] Benson, b. II. p. 236.
[f] Ib. xi. 21, 24, 26. [g] Benson, b. II. p. 289.
[h] xii. 24. [i] Ib. xiv. 1. [k] Benson's Hist. Christ. b. III. p. 50.

cenſion, the apoſtles wrote a public letter from Jeruſalem to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, with which letter Paul travelled through theſe countries, and found the churches "eſtabliſhed in the faith, and increaſing in number daily."[a] From Aſia the apoſtle proceeded into Greece, where, ſoon after his arrival in Macedonia, we find him at Theſſalonica; in which city "ſome of the Jews believed, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude."[b] We meet alſo here with an accidental hint of the general progreſs of the Chriſtian miſſion, in the exclamation of the tumultuous Jews of Theſſalonica, "that they, who had turned the world upſide down, were come thither alſo."[c] At Berea, the next city at which St. Paul arrives, the hiſtorian who was preſent, informs us that "*many* of the Jews believed."[d] The next year and half St. Paul's miniſtry was ſpent at Corinth. Of his ſucceſs in that city we receive the following intimations: "that *many* of the Corinthians believed and were baptized," and "that it was revealed to the apoſtle by Chriſt, that he had *much* people in that city."[e] Within leſs than a year after his departure from Corinth, and twenty-five[f] years after the aſcenſion, St. Paul fixed his ſtation at Epheſus, for the ſpace of two years[g] and ſomething more. The effect of his miniſtry in that city and neighbourhood, drew from the hiſtorian a reflection, "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."[h] And at the concluſion of this period, we find Demetrius at the head of a party, who were alarmed by the progreſs of the religion, complaining, that "not only at Epheſus, but alſo throughout all Aſia, (i. e. the province of Lydia, and the country adjoining to Epheſus) this Paul hath perſuaded and turned away much people."[i] Beſide theſe accounts, there occur, incidentally, mention of converts at Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Cyprus, Cyrene, Macedonia, Philippi.

This is the third period in the propagation of Chriſtianity, ſetting off in the ſeventh year after the aſcenſion, and ending at the twenty-eighth. Now, lay theſe three periods together, and obſerve how the progreſs of the religion by theſe accounts is repreſented. The inſtitution, which properly *began* only after its author's removal from the world, before the end of thirty years, has ſpread itſelf throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria, almoſt

[a] xvi. 5. [b] xvii. 4. [c] Ib. v. 6. [d] xvii. 12.
[e] Ib. xviii. 8—10. [f] Benſon, b. III. p. 166.
[g] Acts xix. 10. [h] xix. 20. [i] Ib. v. 26.

all the numerous districts of the lesser Asia, through Greece, and the islands of the Ægean Sea, the sea-coast of Africa, and had extended itself to Rome, and into Italy. At Antioch in Syria, at Joppa, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Berea, Iconium, Derbe, Antioch in Pisidia, at Lydda, Saron, the number of converts is intimated by the expressions "a great number," "great multitudes," "much people." Converts are mentioned, without any designation of their number,[a] at Tyre, Cesarea, Troas, Athens, Philippi, Lystra, Damascus. During all this time, Jerusalem continued not only the centre of the mission, but a principal seat of the religion; for when St. Paul returned thither, at the conclusion of the period of which we are now considering the accounts, the other apostles pointed out to him, as a reason for his compliance with their advice, "how many thousands (myriads, ten thousands) there were in that city who believed."[b]

Upon this abstract, and the writing from which it is drawn, the following observations seem material to be made:

I. That the account comes from a person, who was himself concerned in a portion of what he relates, and was contemporary with the whole of it; who visited Jerusalem, and frequented the society of those who had acted, and were acting, the chief parts in the transaction. I lay down this point positively; for had the ancient attestations to this valuable record been less satisfactory than they are, the unaffectedness and simplicity with which the author notices his presence upon certain occasions, and the entire absence of art and design from these notices, would have been sufficient to persuade my mind, that, whoever he was, he actually lived in the times, and occupied the situation in which he represents himself to be. When I say, "whoever he was," I do not mean to cast a doubt upon the name, to which antiquity hath ascribed the Acts of the apostles, (for

[a] Considering the extreme conciseness of many parts of the history, the silence about the numbers of converts is no proof of their paucity: for at Philippi, no mention whatever is made of the number, yet St. Paul addressed an epistle to that church. The churches of Galatia, and the affairs of those churches, were considerable enough to be the subject of another letter, and of much of St. Paul's solicitude, yet no account is preserved in the history of his success, or even of his preaching, in that country, except the slight notice which these words convey:—"when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, they assayed to go into Bythinia." xvi. 6, 7.

[b] Ib. xxi. 20.

there is no cauſe, that I am acquainted with, for queſtioning it) but to obſerve, that in ſuch a caſe as this, the time and ſituation of the author is of more importance than his name; and that *theſe* appear from the work itſelf, and in the moſt unſuſpicious form.

II. That this account is a very incomplete account of the preaching and propagation of Chriſtianity; I mean, that, if what we read in the hiſtory be true, much more than what the hiſtory contains muſt be true alſo. For, although the narrative from which our information is derived has been entitled the Acts of the apoſtles, it is in fact a hiſtory of the twelve apoſtles only during a ſhort time of their continuing together at Jeruſalem; and even of this period the account is very conciſe. The work afterwards conſiſts of a few important paſſages of Peter's miniſtry, of the ſpeech and death of Stephen, of the preaching of Philip the deacon; and the ſequel of the volume, that is, two thirds of the whole is taken up with the converſion, the travels, the diſcourſes and hiſtory, of the new apoſtle Paul, in which hiſtory alſo large portions of time are often paſſed over with very ſcanty notice.

III. That the account, ſo far as it goes, is for this very reaſon more credible. Had it been the author's deſign to have *diſplayed* the early progreſs of Chriſtianity, he would undoubtedly have collected, or, at leaſt, have ſet forth, accounts of the preaching of the reſt of the apoſtles, who cannot, without extreme improbability, be ſuppoſed to have remained ſilent and inactive, or not to have met with a ſhare of that ſucceſs which attended their colleagues. To which it may be added, as an obſervation of the ſame kind,

IV. That the intimations of the number of converts, and of the ſucceſs of the preaching of the apoſtles, come out for the moſt part *incidentally*; are drawn from the hiſtorian by the occaſion; ſuch as the murmuring of the Grecian converts, the reſt from perſecution, Herod's death, the ſending of Barnabas to Antioch, and Barnabas calling Paul to his aſſiſtance, Paul coming to a place and finding there diſciples, the clamour of the Jews, the complaint of artificers intereſted in the ſupport of the popular religion, the reaſon aſſigned to induce Paul to give ſatisfaction to the Chriſtians of Jeruſalem. Had it not been for theſe occaſions, it is probable that no notice whatever would have been taken of the number of converts, in ſeveral of the

passages in which that notice now appears. All this tends to remove the suspicion of any design to exaggerate or deceive.

PARALLEL TESTIMONIES with the history, are the letters which have come down to us of St. Paul, and of the other apostles. Those of St. Paul are addressed to the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, the church of Galatia, and, if the inscription be right, of Ephesus, his ministry at all which places is recorded in the history; to the church of Colosse, or rather to the churches of Colosse and Laodicea jointly, which he had not then visited. They recognize by reference the churches of Judea, the churches of Asia, and "all the churches of the Gentiles."[a] In the epistle to the Romans,[b] the author is led to deliver a remarkable declaration, concerning the extent of his preaching, its efficacy, and the cause to which he ascribes it, "to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that, from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." In the epistle to the Colossians,[c] we find an oblique, but very strong signification, of the then general state of the Christian mission, at least as it appeared to St. Paul: "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and *which was preached to every creature which is under heaven?*" which gospel, he had reminded them near the beginning[d] of his letter, "was present with them *as it was in all the world.*" The expressions are hyperbolical; but they are hyperboles which could only be used by a writer who entertained a strong sense of the subject. The first epistle of Peter accosts the Christians dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

SECT. I.

IT comes next to be considered, how far these accounts are confirmed, or followed up, by other evidence.

Tacitus, in delivering a relation, which has already been laid before the reader, of the fire which happened at Rome in the tenth year of Nero, which coincides with the thirtieth year-

[a] 1 Thess. ii. 14. Rom. xvi. 19, 4. [b] xv. 18, 19.
[c] i. 23. [d] i. 6.

after Christ's ascension, asserts, that the emperor, in order to suppress the rumours of having been himself the author of the mischief, procured the Christians to be accused. Of which Christians, thus brought into his narrative, the following is so much of the historian's account, as belongs to our present purpose. "They had their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, but reached the city also. At first they only were apprehended, who confessed themselves of that sect; afterwards *a vast multitude* were discovered by them." This testimony to the early propagation of Christianity is extremely material.

It is from an historian of great reputation, living near the time, from a stranger and an enemy to the religion; and it joins immediately with the period through which the scripture accounts extend. It establishes these points, that the religion began at Jerusalem, that it spread throughout Judea, that it had reached Rome, and not only so, but that it had there obtained a great number of converts. This was about six years after the time that St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, and something more than two years after he arrived there himself. The converts to the religion were then so numerous at Rome, that of those who were betrayed by the information of the persons first prosecuted, a great multitude (multitudo ingens) were discovered and seized.

It seems probable, that the temporary check which Tacitus represents Christianity to have received (repressa in præsens) referred to the persecution at Jerusalem, which followed the death of Stephen; (Acts viii.) and which, by dispersing the converts, caused the institution, in some measure, to disappear. Its second eruption at the same place, and within a short time, has much in it of the character of truth. It was the firmness and perseverance of men who knew what they relied upon.

Next in order of time, and perhaps superior in importance, is the testimony of Pliny the younger. Pliny was the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia, two considerable districts in the northern part of Asia Minor. The situation in which he found his province, led him to apply to the emperor (Trajan) for his direction, as to the conduct he was to hold towards the Christians. The letter, in which this application is contained, was written not quite eighty years after Christ's ascension. The

president in this letter states the measures he had already pursued, and then adds, as his reason for resorting to the emperor's counsel and authority, the following words :—"Suspending all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice; for it has appeared to me a matter highly deserving consideration, especially upon account of the great number of persons who are in danger of suffering: for many of all ages, and of every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless it seemed to me that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the temples, which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims, likewise, are every where (passim) bought up; whereas, for some time, there were few to purchase them. Whence it is easy to imagine, what numbers of men might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted to those that shall repent."[a]

It is obvious to observe, that the passage of Pliny's letter, here quoted, proves not only that the Christians in Pontus and Bithynia were now numerous, but that they had subsisted there for some considerable time. "It is certain (he says) that the temples, which were almost forsaken, (plainly ascribing this desertion of the popular worship to the prevalency of Christianity) begin to be more frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a *long* intermission, are revived." There are also two clauses in the former part of the letter which indicate the same thing; one, in which he declares that he had "never been present at any trials of Christians, and therefore knew not what was the usual subject of inquiry and punishment, or how far either was wont to be urged:" the second clause is the following: "others were named by an informer, who at first, confessed themselves Christians, and afterwards denied it; the rest said, that they had been Christians, some three years ago, some longer, and some above twenty years." It is also apparent that Pliny speaks of the Christians as a description of men well known to the person to whom he writes. His first sentence concerning them is, "I have never been present at the trials of Christians." This mention of the name of Christians, without any preparatory explanation, shows that it was a term familiar both to the writer of the letter, and the person to whom it was addressed. Had it not been

[a] C. Plin. Trajano Imp. lib. x. ep. xcvii.

ſo, Pliny would naturally have begun his letter by informing the emperor, that he had met with a certain ſet of men in the province called Chriſtians.

Here then is a very ſignal evidence of the progreſs of the Chriſtian religion in a ſhort ſpace. It was not fourſcore years after the crucifixion of Jeſus when Pliny wrote this letter; nor ſeventy years ſince the apoſtles of Jeſus began to mention his name to the Gentile world. Bithynia and Pontus were at a great diſtance from Judea, the centre from which the religion ſpread; yet in theſe provinces Chriſtianity had long ſubſiſted, and Chriſtians were now in ſuch numbers, as to lead the Roman governor to report to the emperor, that they were found, not only in cities, but in villages and in open countries; of all ages, of every rank and condition; that they abounded ſo much, as to have produced a viſible deſertion of the temples; that beaſts brought to market for victims had few purchaſers; that the ſacred ſolemnities were much neglected; circumſtances noted by Pliny, for the expreſs purpoſe of ſhowing to the emperor the effect and prevalency of the new inſtitution.

No evidence remains, by which it can be proved that the Chriſtians were more numerous in Pontus and Bithynia than in other parts of the Roman empire; nor has any reaſon been offered to ſhow why they ſhould be ſo. Chriſtianity did not begin in theſe countries, nor near them. I do not know, therefore, that we ought to confine the deſcription in Pliny's letter to the ſtate of Chriſtianity in thoſe provinces, even if no other account of the ſame ſubject had came down to us: but, certainly, this letter may fairly be applied in aid and confirmation of the repreſentations given of the general ſtate of Chriſtianity in the world, by Chriſtian writers of that and the next ſucceeding age.

Juſtin Martyr, who wrote about thirty years after Pliny and one hundred and ſix after the aſcenſion, has theſe remarkable words: "There is not a nation, either of Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of thoſe who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongſt whom prayers and thankſgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the univerſe by the name of the crucified Jeſus."[a] Tertullian, who comes about fifty years after Juſtin, appeals to the governors of the Roman em-

[a] Dial. cum Tryph.

pire in these terms: "We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities, islands, towns and boroughs, the camp, the senate, and the forum. They (the heathen adversaries of Christianity) lament, that every sex, age and condition, and persons of every rank also, are converts to that name."[a] I do allow that these expressions are loose, and may be called declamatory. But even declamation hath its bounds: this public boasting upon a subject, which must be known to every reader, was not only useless but unnatural, unless the truth of the case, in a considerable degree, corresponded with the description; at least unless it had been both true and notorious, that great multitudes of Christians, of all ranks and orders, were to be found in most parts of the Roman empire. The same Tertullian, in another passage, by way of setting forth the extensive diffusion of Christianity, enumerates as belonging to Christ, beside many other countries, the "Moors and Gætulians of Africa, the borders of Spain, several nations of France and parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans, the Sarmatians, Daci, Germans, and Scythians:"[b] and, which is more material than the extent of the institution, the *number* of Christians in the several countries in which it prevailed, is thus expressed by him: "Although so great a multitude, that in almost every city we form the greater part, we pass our time modestly and in silence."[c] Clement Alexandrinus, who preceded Tertullian by a few years, introduces a comparison between the success of Christianity, and that of the most celebrated philosophical institutions. "The philosophers were confined to Greece, and to their particular retainers: but the doctrine of the Master of Christianity did not remain in Judea, as philosophy did in Greece, but is spread throughout the whole world; in every nation and village and city, both of Greeks and Barbarians, converting both whole houses and separate individuals, having already brought over to the truth not a few of the philosophers themselves. If the Greek philosophy be prohibited, it immediately vanishes; whereas, from the first preaching of *our* doctrine, kings and tyrants, governors and presidents, with their whole train, and with the populace on their side, have endeavoured with their whole might to exterminate it, yet doth it flourish more and more."[d] Origen, who follows Tertullian at the distance of only thirty years,

[a] Tertull. Apol. c. 37. [b] Ad. Jud. c. 7.
[c] Ad. Scap. c. III. [d] Clem. Al. Strom. lib. vi. ad fin.

delivers nearly the same account: "In every part of the world, (says he) throughout all Greece, and in all other nations, there are innumerable and immense multitudes, who, having left the laws of their country, and those whom they esteemed gods, have given themselves up to the law of Moses, and the religion of Christ; and this, not without the bitterest resentment from the idolators, by whom they were frequently put to torture, and sometimes to death: and it is wonderful to observe, how, in so short a time, the religion has increased, amidst punishment and death, and every kind of torture."[a] In another passage Origen draws the following candid comparison between the state of Christianity in his time, and the condition of its more primitive ages:—"By the good providence of God the Christian religion has so flourished and increased continually that it is now preached freely without molestation, although there were a thousand obstacles to the spreading of the doctrine of Jesus in the world. But as it was the will of God, that the Gentiles should have the benefit of it, all the councils of men against the Christians were defeated; and by how much the more emperors and governors of provinces, and the people every where, strove to depress them, so much the more have they increased and prevailed exceedingly."[b]

It is well known, that within less than eighty years after this, the Roman empire became Christian under Constantine; and it is probable that Constantine declared himself on the side of the Christians because they were the powerful party: for Arnobius, who wrote immediately before Constantine's accession, speaks of the whole world as filled with Christ's doctrine, of its diffusion throughout all countries, of an innumerable body of Christians in distant provinces, of the strange revolution of opinion, of men of the greatest genius, orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, having come over to the institution, and that also in the face of threats, executions and tortures."[c] And not more than twenty years after Constantine's entire possession of the empire, Julius Firmicus Maternus calls upon the emperors Constantius and Constans to extirpate the relics of the ancient religion; the reduction and fallen condition of which is described by our author in the following words:—"Licet adhue in quibusdam renionibus idolatriæ morientia palpitent membra, tamen in

[a] Or. in. Celf. lib. 1. [b] Or. Con. Celf. lib. vii.

[c] Arnob. in Gentes, l. 1, p. 27, 9, 24, 42, 44. Ed. Lug. Bat. 1650.

eo res est, ut a Christianis omnibus terris pestiferum hoc malum funditus amputetur;" and in another place, "Modicum tantum superest, ut legibus vestris—extincta idolatriæ pereat funesta contagio."[a] It will not be thought that we quote this writer in order to recommend his temper or his judgment, but to show the comparative state of Christianity and of heathenism at this period. Fifty years afterwards, Jerome represents the decline of paganism in language which conveys the same idea of its approaching extinction: "Solitudinem patitur et in urbe gentilitas. Dii quondam nationum, cum bubonibus et noctuis, in solis culminibus remanserunt."[b] Jerome here indulges a triumph, natural and allowable in a zealous friend of the cause but which could only be suggested to his mind by the consent and universality with which he saw the religion received. "But now (says he) the passion and resurrection of Christ are celebrated in the discourses and writings of all nations. I need not mention Jews, Greeks and Latins. The Indians, Persians, Goths and Egyptians, philosophise, and firmly believe the immortality of the soul and future recompenses, which, before, the greatest philosophers had denied, or doubted of, or perplexed with their disputes. The fierceness of Thracians and Scythians is now softened by the gentle sound of the gospel; and every where Christ is all in all."[c] Were therefore the motives of Constantine's conversion ever so problematical, the easy establishment of Christianity, and the ruin of heathenism under him and his immediate successors, is of itself a proof of the progress which Christianity had made in the preceding period. It may be added also, "that Maxentius, the rival of Constantine, had shown himself friendly to the Christians. Therefore, of those who were contending for worldly power and empire, one actually favoured and flattered them, and another may be suspected to have joined himself to them, partly from consideration of interest; so considerable were they become, under external disadvantages of all sorts."[d] This at least is certain, that throughout the whole transaction hitherto, the great seemed to follow, not to lead the public opinion.

It may help to convey to us some notion of the extent and progress of Christianity, or rather of the character and quality of

[a] De Error. Profan. Relig. c. 21. p. 172. Quoted by Lardner, vol. VIII, p. 262.

[b] Jer. Lect. ep. 57.

[c] Jer. ep. 8. ad Heliod.

[d] Lard. vol. III. p. 330.

many early Christians, of their learning and their labours, to notice the number of Christian *writers* who flourished in these ages. St. Jerome's catalogue contains *sixty-six* writers within the three first centuries, and the six first years of the fourth; and *fifty-four* between that time and his own, viz. A. D. 392. Jerome introduces his catalogue with the following just remonstrance:—"Let those, who say the church has had no philosophers, nor eloquent and learned men, observe who and what they were, who founded, established and adorned it; let them cease to accuse our faith of rusticity, and confess their mistake."[a] Of these writers, several, as Justin, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Bardesanes, Hippolitus, Eusebius, were voluminous writers. Christian writers abounded particularly about the year 178. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, founded a library in that city A. D. 212. Pamphilus, the friend of Origen, founded a library at Cesarea, A. D. 294. Public defences were also set forth, by various advocates of the religion, in the course of its three first centuries. Within one hundred years after Christ's ascension, Quadratus and Aristides, whose works, except some few fragments of the first, are lost; and about twenty years afterwards, Justin Martyr, whose works remain, presented apologies for the Christian religion to the Roman emperors; Quadratus and Aristides to Adrian, Justin to Antoninus Pius, and a second to Marcus Antoninus. Melito, bishop of Sardis, and Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis, and Miltiades, men of great reputation, did the same to Marcus Antoninus twenty years afterwards:[b] and ten years after this, Apollonius, who suffered martyrdom under the emperor Commodus, composed an apology for his faith, which he read in the senate, and which was afterwards published.[c] Fourteen years after the apology of Apollonius, Tertullian addressed the work, which now remains under that name, to the governors of provinces in the Roman empire; and, about the same time, Minucius Felix composed a defence of the Christian religion, which is still extant; and, shortly after the conclusion of this century, copious defences of Christianity were published by Arnobius and Lactantius.

[a] Jer. Prol. in lib. de scr. ecc.

[b] Euseb. Hist. l. iv. c. 26. See also Lardner, vol. II. p. 666.

[c] Lard. vol. II. p. 687.

Sect. II.

Reflections upon the preceding Account.

IN viewing the progress of Christianity, our first attention is due to the number of converts at Jerusalem, immediately after its founder's death; because this success was a success at the *time*, and upon the *spot*, when and where the chief part of the history had been transacted.

We are, in the next place, called upon to attend to the early establishment of numerous Christian societies in Judea and Galilee, which countries had been the scene of Christ's miracles and ministry, and where the memory of what had passed, and the knowledge of what was alleged, must have yet been fresh and certain.

We are, thirdly, invited to recollect the success of the apostles and of their companions, at the several places to which they came, both within and without Judea; because it was the credit given to original witnesses, appealing for the truth of their accounts to what themselves had seen and heard. The effect also of their preaching, strongly confirms the truth of what our history positively and circumstantially relates, that they were able to exhibit to their hearers supernatural attestations of their mission.

We are, lastly, to consider the *subsequent* growth and spread of the religion, of which we receive successive intimations, and satisfactory, though general and occasional accounts, until its full and final establishment.

In all these several stages, the history is without a parallel; for it must be observed, that we have not now been tracing the progress, and describing the prevalency of an opinion, founded upon philosophical or critical arguments, upon mere deductions of reason, or the construction of ancient writings, (of which kind are the several theories which have, at different times, gained possession of the public mind in various departments of science and literature; and of one or other of which kind are the tenets also which divide the various sects of Christianity) but that we speak of a system, the very basis and postulatum of which, was a supernatural character ascribed to a particular person; of a doctrine, the truth whereof depended entirely upon the truth of a matter of fact then recent. "To establish a new religion, even amongst a few people, or in one single nation, is a thing in itself exceedingly difficult. To reform some corrup-

tions which may have spread in a religion, or to make new regulations in it, is not perhaps so hard, when the main and principal parts of that religion are preserved entire and unshaken; and yet this very often cannot be accomplished, without an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, and may be attempted a thousand times without success. But to introduce a new faith, a new way of thinking and acting, and to persuade many nations to quit the religion in which their ancestors had lived and died, which had been delivered down to them from time immemorial, to make them forsake and despise the deities which they had been accustomed to reverence and worship; this is a work of still greater difficulty.[a] The resistance of education, worldly policy, and superstition, is almost invincible."

If men, in these days, be Christians in consequence of their education, in submission to authority, or in compliance with fashion, let us recollect that it was not so from the beginning. The first race of Christians, as well as millions who succeeded them, became such in formal opposition to all these motives, to the whole power and strength of this influence. Every argument therefore, and every instance, which sets forth the prejudice of education, and the almost irresistible effects of that prejudice (and no persons are more fond of expatiating upon this subject than deistical writers) in fact confirms the evidence of Christianity.

But, in order to judge of the argument which is drawn from the early propagation of Christianity, I know no fairer way of proceeding, than to compare what we have seen of the subject, with the success of Christian missions in modern ages. In the East-India mission, supported by the society for promoting Christian knowledge, we hear sometimes of thirty, sometimes of forty, being baptized in the course of a year, and these principally children. Of converts properly so called, that is, of adults voluntarily embracing Christianity, the number is extremely small. "Notwithstanding the labour of missionaries for upwards of two hundred years, and the establishments of different Christian nations who support them, there are not twelve thousand Indian Christians, and those almost entirely outcasts."[b]

[a] Jortin's Dis. on the Christ. Rel. p. 107. ed. IV.

[b] Sketches relating to the history, learning, and manners of the Hindoos, p. 48. quoted by Dr. Robertson, Hist. Dis. concerning ancient India, p. 236.

I lament, as much as any man, the little progreſs which Chriſtianity has made in theſe countries, and the inconſiderable effect that has followed the labours of its miſſionaries; but I ſee in it a ſtrong proof of the divine origin of the religion. What had the apoſtles to aſſiſt them in propagating Chriſtianity, which the miſſionaries have not? If piety and zeal had been ſufficient, I doubt not but that our miſſionaries poſſeſs theſe qualities in a high degree, for nothing, except piety and zeal, could engage them in the undertaking. If ſanctity of life and manners was the allurement, the conduct of theſe men is unblameable. If the advantage of education and learning be looked to, there is not one of the modern miſſionaries, who is not, in this reſpect, ſuperior to all the apoſtles; and that not only abſolutely, but, what is of more importance, *relatively*, in compariſon, that is, with thoſe amongſt whom they exerciſe their office. "If the intrinſic excellency of the religion, the perfection of its morality, the purity of its precepts, the eloquence or tenderneſs or ſublimity of various parts of its writings, were the recommendations by which it made its way, theſe remain the ſame. If the character and circumſtances, under which the preachers were introduced to the countries in which they taught, be accounted of importance, this advantage is all on the ſide of the modern miſſionaries. They come from a country and a people, to which the Indian world look up with ſentiments of deference. The apoſtles came forth amongſt the Gentiles under no other name than that of Jews, which was preciſely the character they deſpiſed and derided. If it be diſgraceful in India to become a Chriſtian, it could not be much leſs ſo to be enrolled amongſt thoſe, "quos per flagitia inviſos, vulgus Chriſtianos appellabat." If the religion which they had to encounter be conſidered, the difference, I apprehend, will not be great. The theology of both was nearly the ſame, "what is ſuppoſed to be performed by the power of Jupiter, of Neptune, of Æolus, of Mars, of Venus, according to the mythology of the Weſt, is aſcribed, in the Eaſt, to the agency of Agnio, the god of fire, Varoon, the god of oceans, Vayoo, the god of wind, Cama, the god of love."[a] The ſacred rites of the weſtern polytheiſm were gay, feſtive and licentious; the rites of the public religion in the Eaſt partake of the ſame character, with a more avowed indecency. "In every func-

[a] Bagvat Geeta, p. 94. quoted by Dr. Robertſon, Ind. Diſ. p. 306.

tion performed in the pagodas, as well as in every public proceſſion, it is the office of theſe women (i. e. of women prepared by the Brahmins for the purpoſe) to dance before the idols, and to ſing hymns in his praiſe; and it is difficult to ſay, whether they treſpaſs moſt againſt decency by the geſtures they exhibit, or by the verſes which they recite. The walls of the pagodas were covered with paintings in a ſtyle no leſs indelicate."[a] [b]

On both ſides of the compariſon the popular religion had a ſtrong eſtabliſhment. In ancient Greece and Rome it was ſtrictly incorporated with the ſtate. The magiſtrate was the prieſt. The higheſt offices of government bore the moſt diſtinguiſhed part in the celebration of the public rites. In India, a powerful and numerous caſt poſſeſs excluſively the adminiſtration of the eſtabliſhed worſhip; and are, of conſequence, devoted to its ſervice, and attached to its intereſt. In both, the prevailing mythology was deſtitute of any proper evidence, or rather, in both, the origin of the tradition is run up into ages, long anterior to the exiſtence of credible hiſtory, or of written language. The Indian chronology computes eras by millions of years, and the life of man by thouſands;[c] and in theſe, or prior to theſe, is placed the hiſtory of their divinities. In both, the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtition held the ſame place in the public opinion; that is to ſay, in both it was credited by the bulk of the people,[d] but by the learned and philoſophic part of the com-

[a] Others of the deities of the Eaſt are of an auſtere and gloomy character, to be propitiated by victims, ſometimes by human ſacrifices, and by voluntary torments of the moſt excruciating kind.

[b] Voyage de Gentil. vol. I. p. 244—260. Preface to Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 57. quoted by Dr. Robertſon, p. 320.

[c] "The Suffec Jogue, or age of purity, is ſaid to have laſted three million two hundred thouſand years; and they hold that the life of man was extended in that age to one hundred thouſand years; but there is a difference amongſt the Indian writers of ſix millions of years in the computation of this era." Ib.

[d] "How abſurd ſoever the articles of faith may be, which ſuperſtition has adopted, or how unhallowed the rites which it preſcribes, the former are received, in every age and country, with unheſitating aſſent; by the great body of the people, and the latter obſerved with ſcrupulous exactneſs. In our reaſonings concerning opinions and practices, which differ widely from our own, we are extremely apt to err. Having been inſtructed ourſelves in the principles of a religion, worthy, in every reſpect, of that divine wiſdom by which they were dictated, we frequently expreſs wonder at the credulity of nations, in embracing ſyſtems of belief which appear to us ſo directly repug-

munity, either derided, or regarded by them as only fit to be upholden for the ſake of its political uſes.[a]

Or if it ſhould be allowed, that the ancient heathens believed in their religion leſs generally than the preſent Indians do, I am far from thinking that this circumſtance would afford any facility to the work of the apoſtles, above that of modern miſſionaries. To me it appears, and I think it material to be remarked, that a diſbelief of the eſtabliſhed religion of their country (I do not mean a rejection of ſome of its articles, but a radical diſbelief of the whole) has no tendency to diſpoſe men for the reception of another; but that, on the contrary, it generates a ſettled contempt of all religious pretenſions whatever. General infidelity is the hardeſt ſoil which the propagators of a new religion can have to work upon. Could a Methodiſt or Moravian promiſe himſelf a better chance of ſucceſs with a French eſprit fort, who had been accuſtomed to laugh at the popery of his country, than with a believing Mahometan or Hindoo? Or are our modern unbelievers in Chriſtianity for that reaſon in danger of becoming Mahometans or Hindoos? It does not appear that the Jews, who had a body of hiſtorical evidence to offer for their religion, and who at that time undoubtedly entertained and held forth the expectation of a future ſtate, derived any great advantage, as to the extenſion of their ſyſtem, from the diſcredit into which the popular religion had fallen with many of their heathen neighbours.

We have particularly directed our obſervations to the ſtate and progreſs of Chriſtianity amongſt the inhabitants of *India*;

nant to right reaſon; and ſometimes ſuſpect, that tenets ſo wild and extravagant do not really gain credit with them. But experience may ſatisfy us, that neither our wonder nor ſuſpicions are well founded. No article of the public religion was called in queſtion by thoſe people of ancient Europe, with whoſe hiſtory we are beſt acquainted; and no practice, which it enjoined, appeared improper to them. On the other hand, every opinion that tended to diminiſh the reverence of men for the gods of their country, or to alienate them from their worſhip, excited, among the Greeks and Romans, that indignant zeal, which is natural to every people attached to their religion by a firm perſuaſion of its truth." Ind. Diſ. p. 321.

[a] That the learned Brahmins of the Eaſt are rational theiſts, and ſecretly reject the eſtabliſhed theory, and contemn the rites that were founded upon them, or rather conſider them as contrivances to be ſupported for their political uſes, ſee Dr. Robertſon's Ind. Diſ. p. 324—334.

but the history of the Christian mission in other countries, where the efficacy of the mission is left solely to the conviction wrought by the preaching of strangers, presents the same idea, as the Indian mission does, of the feebleness and inadequacy of human means. About twenty-five years ago, was published in England, a translation from the Dutch of a history of Greenland, and a relation of the mission, for above thirty years carried on in that country, by the Unitas Fratrum or Moravians. Every part of that relation confirms the opinion we have stated. Nothing could surpass, or hardly equal, the zeal and patience of the missionaries. Yet their historian, in the conclusion of his narrative, could find place for no reflections more encouraging than the following:—"A person that had known the heathen, that had seen the little benefit from the great pains hitherto taken with them, and considered that one after another had abandoned all hopes of the conversion of those infidels: (and some thought they would never be converted, till they saw miracles wrought as in the apostle's days, and this the Greenlanders expected and demanded of their instructors) one that considered this, I say, would not wonder at the past unfruitfulness of these young beginners, as at their stedfast perseverance in the midst of nothing but distress, difficulties and impediments, internally and externally; and that they never desponded of the conversion of those poor creatures amidst all seeming impossibilities."[a]

From the widely disproportionate effects, which attend the preaching of modern missionaries of Christianity, compared with what followed the ministry of Christ and his apostles, under circumstances either alike, or not so unlike as to account for the difference, a conclusion is fairly drawn, in support of what our histories deliver concerning them, that they possessed means of conviction, which we have not; that they had proofs to appeal to, which we want.

Sect. III.

Of the Religion of Mahomet.

THE only event in the history of the human species, which admits of comparison with the propagation of Christianity, is the success of Mahometanism. The Mahometan institution was

[a] Hist. Greenland, vol. II. p. 376.

rapid in its progress, was recent in its history, and was founded upon a supernatural or prophetic character assumed by its author. In these articles the resemblance with Christianity is confessed. But there are points of difference, which separate, we apprehend, the two cases entirely.

I. Mahomet did not found his pretensions upon miracles, properly so called; that is, upon proofs of supernatural agency, capable of being known and attested by others. Christians are warranted in this assertion by the evidence of the Koran, in which Mahomet not only does not affect the power of working miracles, but expressly disclaims it. The following passages of that book furnish direct proofs of the truth of what we allege:— "The infidels say, Unless a sign be sent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe; thou art a preacher only."[a] Again, "nothing hindered us from sending *thee* with miracles, except that the former nations have charged them with imposture."[b] And lastly, "they say, Unless a sign be sent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe; answer, Signs are in the power of God alone, and I am no more than a public preacher. Is it not sufficient for them, that we have sent down unto them the book of the Koran to be read unto them?"[c] Beside these acknowledgments, I have observed *thirteen* distinct places, in which Mahomet puts the objection (unless a sign, &c.) into the mouth of the unbeliever, in not one of which does he allege a miracle in reply. His answer is, "that God giveth the power of working miracles when and to whom he pleaseth;"[d] "that if he should work miracles, they would not believe;"[e] "that they had before rejected Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets, who wrought miracles;"[f] "that the Koran itself was a miracle."[g]

The only place in the Koran, in which it can be pretended that a sensible miracle is referred to (for I do not allow the secret visitations of Gabriel, the night journey of Mahomet to heaven, or the presence in battle of invisible hosts of angels, to deserve the name of *sensible* miracles) is the beginning of the fifty-fourth chapter. The words are these: "The hour of judgment approacheth, *and the moon hath been split in sunder*, but if the unbelievers see a sign, they turn aside, saying,

[a] Sale's Koran, c. xiii. p. 201. ed. quarto. [b] c. xvii. p. 232.
[c] Ib. c. xxix. p. 328. [d] c. v. x. xiii. twice.
[e] c. vi. [f] c. iii. xxi. xxviii. [g] c. xvi.

This is a powerful charm." The Mahometan expositors disagree in their interpretation of this passage; some explaining it to be a mention of the splitting of the moon, as one of the future signs of the approach of the day of judgment; others referring it to a miraculous appearance which had then taken place.[a] It seems to me not improbable, that Mahomet may have taken advantage of some extraordinary halo, or other unusual appearance of the moon, which had happened about that time; and which supplied a foundation both for this passage, and for the story which in after times had been raised out of it.

After this more than silence; after these authentic *confessions* of the Koran, we are not to be moved with miraculous stories related of Mahomet by Abulfeda, who wrote his life above six hundred years after his death, or which are found in the legend of Al Jannabi, who came two hundred years later.[b]

On the contrary, from comparing what Mahomet himself wrote and said, with what was afterwards reported of him by his followers, the plain and fair conclusion is, that, when the religion was established by conquest, then, and not till then, came out the stories of his miracles.

Now this difference alone constitutes, in my opinion, a bar to all reasoning from one case to the other. The success of a religion founded upon a miraculous history, shows the credit which was given to the history; and this credit, under the circumstances in which it was given, i. e. by persons capable of knowing the truth, and interested to inquire after it, is evidence of the reality of the history, and, by consequence, of the truth of the religion. Where a miraculous history is not alleged, no part of this argument can be applied. We admit that multitudes acknowledged the pretensions of Mahomet; but these pretensions being destitute of miraculous evidence, we know that the grounds upon which they were acknowledged, could not be secure grounds of persuasion to his followers, nor their example any authority to us. Admit the whole of Mahomet's authentic history, so far as it was of a nature capable of being known or

[a] Vide Sale in loc.

[b] It does not, I think, appear, that these historians had any written accounts to appeal to more ancient than the Sonnah, which was a collection of traditions, made by order of the Caliphs, two hundred years after Mahomet's death. Mahomet died A. D. 632; Al. Bochari, one of the six doctors who compiled the Sonnah, was born A. D. 869. Prideaux's Life of Mahomet, p. 192. ed. 7th.

witneſſed by others, to be true, (which is certainly to admit all the reception of the religion can be brought to prove) and Mahomet might be ſtill an impoſtor, or enthuſiaſt, or an union of both. Admit to be true almoſt any part of Chriſt's hiſtory, of that, I mean, which was public, and within the cognizance of his followers, and he muſt have come from God. Where matter of fact is in queſtion, where miracles are not alleged, I do not ſee that the progreſs of a religion is a better argument of its truth, than the prevalency of any ſyſtem of opinion in natural religion, morality, or phyſics, is a proof of the truth of thoſe opinions. And we know that this ſort of argument is inadmiſſible in any branch of philoſophy whatever.

But it will be ſaid, If one religion could make its way without miracles, why might not another? To which I reply, firſt, That this is not the queſtion: the proper queſtion is not, whether a religious inſtitution could be ſet up without miracles, but whether a religion, or a change of religion, founding itſelf in miracles, could ſucceed without any reality to reſt upon. I apprehend theſe two caſes to be very different; and I apprehend Mahomet's not taking this courſe to be one proof, amongſt others, that the thing is difficult, if not impoſſible, to be accompliſhed: certainly it was not from an unconſciouſneſs of the value and importance of miraculous evidence, for it is very obſervable, that in the ſame volume, and ſometimes in the ſame chapters, in which Mahomet ſo repeatedly diſclaims the power of working miracles himſelf, he is inceſſantly referring to the miracles of preceding prophets. One would imagine, to hear ſome men talk, or to read ſome books, that the ſetting up of a religion by dint of miraculous pretences was a thing of every day's experience; whereas I believe, that, except the Jewiſh and Chriſtian religion, there is no tolerably well authenticated account of any ſuch thing having been accompliſhed.

II. Secondly, the eſtabliſhment of Mahomet's religion was effected by cauſes, which, in no degree, appertained to the origin of Chriſtianity.

During the firſt twelve years of his miſſion, Mahomet had recourſe only to perſuaſion. This is allowed. And there is ſufficient reaſon from the effect to believe, that if he had confined himſelf to this mode of propagating his religion, we of the preſent day ſhould never have heard either of him or it. "Three years were ſilently employed in the converſion of *fourteen* proſelytes. For ten years the religion advanced with

a slow and painful progress within the walls of Mecca. The number of proselytes in the seventh year of his mission may be estimated by the absence of *eighty-three* men and eighteen women, who retired to Ethiopia.[a] Yet this progress, such as it was, appears to have been aided by some very important advantages, which Mahomet found in his situation, in his mode of conducting his design, and in his doctrine.

1. Mahomet was the grandson of the most powerful and honourable family in Mecca; and although the early death of his father had not left him a patrimony suitable to his birth, he had, long before the commencement of his mission, repaired this deficiency by an opulent marriage. A person considerable by his wealth, of high descent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country, taking upon himself the character of a religious teacher, would not fail of attracting attention and followers.

2. Mahomet conducted his design, in the outset especially, with great art and prudence. He conducted it as a politician would conduct a plot. His first application was to his own family. This gained him his wife's uncle, a considerable person in Mecca, together with his cousin Ali, afterwards the celebrated Caliph, then a youth of great expectation, and even already distinguished by his attachment, impetuosity and courage.[b] He next addressed himself to Abu Beer, a man amongst the first of the Koreish in wealth and influence. The interest and example of Abu Beer drew in five other principal persons in Mecca, whose solicitations prevailed upon five more of the same rank. This was the work of three years, during which time every thing was transacted in secret. Upon the strength of these allies, and under the powerful protection of his family, who, however some of them might disapprove his enterprise, or deride his pretensions, would not suffer the orphan of their house, the relict of their favourite brother, to be insulted,—Mahomet now commenced his public preaching. And the advance which he made, during the nine or ten remaining years of his

[a] Gibbon's Hist. vol. IX. p. 244. et seq. ed. Dub.

[b] Of which Mr. Gibbon has preserved the following specimen:—"When Mahomet called out in an assembly of his family, who among you will be my companion and my vizir? Ali, then only in the fourteenth year of his age, suddenly replied, O prophet, I am the man; whosoever rises against thee, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O prophet, I will be thy vizir over them." Vol. IX. p. 245.

peaceable miniſtry, was by no means greater than what, with theſe advantages, and with the additional and ſingular circumſtance of their being no *eſtabliſhed* religion at Mecca at that time to contend with, might reaſonably have been expected. How ſoon his primitive adherents were let into the ſecret of his views of empire, or in what ſtage of his undertaking theſe views firſt opened themſelves to his own mind, it is not now eaſy to determine. The event however was, that theſe his firſt proſelytes all ultimately attained to riches and honours, to the command of armies, and the government of kingdoms.[a]

3. The Arabs deduced their deſcent from Abraham through the line of Iſhmael. The inhabitants of Mecca, in common probably with the other Arabian tribes, acknowledged, as I think may clearly be collected from the Koran, one ſupreme Deity, but had aſſociated with him many objects of idolatrous worſhip. The great doctrine, with which Mahomet ſet out, was the ſtrict and excluſive unity of God. Abraham, he told them, their illuſtrious anceſtor; Iſhmael, the father of their nation; Moſes, the law-giver of the Jews; and Jeſus, the author of Chriſtianity, had all aſſerted the ſame thing; that their followers had univerſally corrupted the truth, and that *he* was now commiſſioned to reſtore it to the world. Was it to be wondered at, that a doctrine ſo ſpecious, and authoriſed by names, ſome or other of which were holden in the higheſt veneration by every deſcription of his hearers, ſhould, in the hands of a popular miſſionary, prevail to the extent in which Mahomet ſucceeded by his pacific miniſtry?

4. Of the inſtitution which Mahomet joined with this fundamental doctrine, and of the Koran in which that inſtitution is delivered, we diſcover, I think, two purpoſes that pervade the whole, viz. to make converts, and to make his converts ſoldiers.

The following particulars, amongſt others, may be conſidered as pretty evident indications of theſe deſigns:

1. When Mahomet began to preach, his addreſs to the Jews, the Chriſtians, and to the Pagan Arabs, was, that the religion which he taught, was no other than what had been originally their own. "We believe in God, and that which hath been ſent down unto us, and that which hath been ſent down unto Abraham, and Iſhmael, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which was delivered unto Moſes and Jeſus, and that which

[a] Gib. vol. IX. p. 244.

was delivered unto the prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them."[a] "He hath ordained you the religion which he commanded Noah, and which we have revealed unto thee, O Mohammed, and which we commanded Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying, Observe this religion, and be not divided therein."[b] "He hath chosen you, and hath not imposed on you any difficulty in the religion which he hath given you, the religion of your father Abraham."[c]

2. The author of the Koran never ceases from describing the future anguish of unbelievers, their despair, regret, penitence and torment. It is the point which he labours above all others. And these descriptions are conceived in terms, which will appear in no small degree impressive, even to the modern reader of an English translation. Doubtless they would operate with much greater force upon the minds of those to whom they were immediately directed. The terror which they seem well calculated to inspire, would be to many tempers a powerful application.

3. On the other hand, his voluptuous paradise; his robes of silk, his palaces of marble, his rivers and shades, his groves and couches, his wines, his dainties; and, above all, his seventy-two virgins assigned to each of the faithful, of resplendent beauty and eternal youth; intoxicated the imaginations, and seized the passions of his Eastern followers.

4. But Mahomet's highest heaven was reserved for those, who fought his battles, or expended their fortunes in his cause. "Those believers who sit still at home, not having any hurt, and those who employ their fortunes and their persons for the religion of God, shall not be held equal. God hath preferred those who employ their fortunes and their persons in that cause, to a degree above those who sit at home. God hath indeed promised every one paradise, but God hath preferred those who *fight for the faith*, before those who sit still, by adding unto them a great reward; by degrees of honour conferred upon them from him, and by granting them forgiveness and mercy."[d] Again, "Do ye reckon the giving drink to the pilgrims, and the visiting of the holy temple, to be actions as meritorious as those performed by him who believeth in God and the last day, and

[a] Sale's Koran, c. ii. p. 17. [b] Ib. c. xlii. p. 393.
[c] Ib. c. xxii. p. 281. [d] Ib. c. iv. p. 73.

fighteth for the religion of God? they shall not be held equal with God. They who have believed, and fled their country, and employed their substance and their persons in the defence of God's true religion, shall be in the highest degree of honour with God; and these are they who shall be happy. The Lord sendeth them good tidings of mercy from him, and good will, and of gardens wherein they shall enjoy lasting pleasures. They shall continue therein forever, for with God is a great reward."[a] And, once more, "Verily God hath purchased of the true believers their souls and their substance, promising them the enjoyment of paradise, on condition that they *fight for the cause of God*, whether they slay or be slain, the promise for the same is assuredly due by the law and the gospel and the Koran."[b c]

5. His doctrine of predestination was applicable, and was applied by him, to the same purpose of fortifying and of exalting the courage of his adherents. "If any thing of the matter had happened unto us, we had not been slain here. Answer, if ye had been in your houses, verily they would have gone forth to fight, whose slaughter was decreed to the places where they died."[d]

6. In warm regions, the appetite of the sexes is ardent, the passion for inebriating liquors moderate. In compliance with this distinction, although Mahomet laid a restraint upon the drinking of wine, in the use of women he allowed an almost unbounded indulgence. Four wives, with the liberty of changing them at pleasure,[e] together with the persons of all his captives,[f] was an irresistible bribe to an Arabian warrior. "God is minded," says he, speaking of this very subject, "to make his religion light unto you, for man was created weak." How different this from the unaccommodating purity of the gospel? How would Mahomet have succeeded with the Christian lesson in his mouth, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her,

[a] Ib. c. ix. p. 151. [b] Ib. p. 164.

[c] "The sword (saith Mahomet) is the key of heaven and of hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting or prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven at the day of judgment; his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk, and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim." Gibb. vol. IX. p. 256.

[d] C. iii. p. 54. [e] C. iv. p. 63. [f] Gibb. p. 255.

hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." It must be added, that Mahomet did not venture upon the prohibition of wine, till the fourth year of the Hegira, or the seventeenth of his mission,[a] when his military successes had completely established his authority. The same observation holds of the fast of the Ramadan,[b] and of the most laborious part of his institution, the pilgrimage to Mecca.[c]

What has hitherto been collected from the records of the Mussulman history, relates to the twelve or thirteen years of Mahomet's peacable preaching, which part alone of his life and enterprise admits of the smallest comparison with the origin of Christianity. A new scene is now unfolded. The city of Medina, distant about ten days journey from Mecca, was at that time distracted by the hereditary contentions of two hostile tribes. These feuds were exasperated by the mutual persecutions of the Jews and Christians, and of the different Christian sects by which the city was inhabited.[d] The religion of Mahomet presented, in some measure, a point of union or compromise to these divided opinions. It embraced the principles which were common to them all. Each party saw in it an honourable acknowledgment of the fundamental truth of their own system. To the Pagan Arab, somewhat imbued with the sentiments and knowledge of his Jewish or Christian fellow-citizen, it offered no offensive or very improbable theology. This recommendation procured to Mahometanism a more favourable reception at Medina, than its author had been able, by twelve years' painful endeavours, to obtain for it at Mecca. Yet, after all, the progress of the religion was inconsiderable. His missionary could only collect a congregation of forty persons.[e] It was not a religious, but a political association, which ultimately introduced Mahomet into Medina. Harassed, as it should seem, and disgusted by the long continuance of factions and disputes, the inhabitants of that city saw in the admission of the prophet's authority, a rest from the miseries which they had suffered, and

[a] Mod. Un. Hist. vol. I. p. 126. [b] Ib. p. 112.

[c] This latter, however, already prevailed amongst the Arabs, and had grown out of their excessive veneration for the Caaba. Mahomet's law, in this respect, was rather a compliance than an innovation.*

[d] Mod. Un. Hist. vol. I. p. 100. [e] Ib. p. 85.

* *Sale's Prelim. p.* 122.

a ſuppreſſion of the violence and fury which they had learnt to condemn. After an embaſſy therefore, compoſed of believers and unbelievers,[a] and of perſons of both tribes, with whom a treaty was concluded of ſtrict alliance and ſupport, Mahomet made his public entry, and was received as the ſovereign of Medina.

From this time, or ſoon after this time, the impoſtor changed his language and his conduct. Having now a town at his command, where to arm his party, and to head them with ſecurity, he enters upon new counſels. He now pretends that a divine commiſſion is given to him to attack the infidels, to deſtroy idolatry, and to ſet up the true faith by the ſword.[b] An early victory over a very ſuperior force, achieved by conduct and bravery, eſtabliſhed the renown of his arms, and of his perſonal character.[c] Every year after this was marked by battles or aſſaſſinations. The nature and activity of Mahomet's future exertions may be eſtimated from the computation, that, in the nine following years of his life, he commanded his army in perſon in eight general engagements,[d] and undertook, by himſelf or his lieutenants, fifty military enterpriſes.

From this time we have nothing left to account for, but that Mahomet ſhould collect an army, that his army ſhould conquer, and that his religion ſhould proceed together with his conqueſts. The ordinary experience of human affairs, leaves us little to wonder at, in any of theſe effects; and they were likewiſe each aſſiſted by peculiar facilities. From all ſides, the roving Arabs crowded around the ſtandard of religion and plunder, of freedom and victory, of arms and rapine. Beſide the highly painted joys of a carnal paradiſe, Mahomet rewarded his followers in this world with a liberal diviſion of the ſpoils and with the perſons of their female captives.[e] The condition of Arabia, occupied by ſmall independent tribes, expoſed it to the impreſſion, and yielded to the progreſs of a firm and reſolute army. After the reduction of his native peninſula, the weakneſs alſo of the Roman provinces on the North and the Weſt, as well as the diſtracted ſtate of the Perſian empire on the Eaſt, facilitated the ſucceſsful invaſion of neighbouring countries. That Mahomet's conqueſts ſhould carry his religion along

[a] Ib. p. 85. [b] Ib. p 88.

[c] Victory of Bedr. ib. p. 106. [d] Un. Hiſt. vol. I. p. 255.

[e] Gibb. vol. IX. p. 255.

with them, will excite little surprise, when we know the conditions which he proposed to the vanquished. Death or conversion was the only choice offered to idolaters. "Strike off their heads; strike off all the ends of their fingers:[a] kill the idolaters, whereſoever ye ſhall find them."[b] To the Jews and Chriſtians was left a ſomewhat milder alternative, of ſubjection and tribute, if they perſiſted in their own religion, or of an equal participation in the rights and liberty, the honours and privileges, of the faithful, if they embraced the religion of their conquerors. "Ye Chriſtian dogs, you know your option; the Koran, the tribute, or the ſword."[c] The corrupt ſtate of Chriſtianity in the ſeventh century, and the contentions of its ſects, unhappily ſo fell in with men's care for their ſafety, or their fortunes, as to induce many to forſake its profeſſion. Add to all which, that Mahomet's victories not only operated by the natural effect of conqueſt, but that they were conſtantly repreſented, both to his friends and enemies, as divine declarations in his favour. Succeſs was evidence. Proſperity carried with it not only influence but proof. "Ye have already," ſays he, after the battle of Bedr, "had a miracle ſhown you, in two armies which attacked each other; one army fought for God's true religion, but the other were infidels."[d] Again, "*Ye* ſlew not thoſe who were ſlain at Bedr, but God ſlew them. If ye deſire a deciſion of the matter between us, now hath a deciſion come unto you."[e]

Many more paſſages might be collected out of the Koran to the ſame effect. But they are unneceſſary. The ſucceſs of Mahometaniſm during this, and indeed every future period of its hiſtory, bears ſo little reſemblance to the early propagation of Chriſtianity, that no inference whatever can juſtly be drawn from it to the prejudice of the Chriſtian argument. For what are we comparing? A Galilean peaſant, accompanied by a few fiſhermen, with a conqueror at the head of his army. We compare Jeſus, without force, without power, without ſupport, without one external circumſtance of attraction or influence, prevailing againſt the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy of his country, againſt the ancient religious opinions, the pompous religious rites, the philoſophy, the wiſdom, the authority of the Roman empire, in the moſt poliſhed and enlightened period of its exiſtence, with Mahomet making his way amongſt Arabs; collect-

[a] Sale's Koran, c. viii. p. 140. [b] Ib. c. ix. p. 149.
[c] Gibb. ib. p. 337. [d] Sale's Kor. c. iii. p. 36. [e] Ch. viii. p. 141.

ing followers in the midſt of conqueſts and triumphs, in the darkeſt ages and countries of the world, and when ſucceſs in arms not only operated by that command of men's wills and perſons which attends proſperous undertakings, but was conſidered as a ſure teſtimony of divine approbation. That multitudes, perſuaded by this argument, ſhould join the train of a victorious chief; that ſtill greater multitudes ſhould, without any argument bow down before irreſiſtible power, is a conduct in which we cannot ſee much to ſurpriſe us: in which we can ſee nothing that reſembles the cauſes, by which the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity was effected.

The ſucceſs therefore of Mahometaniſm ſtands not in the way of this important concluſion, that the propagation of Chriſtianity, in the manner and under the circumſtances in which it was propagated, is an *unique* in the hiſtory of the ſpecies. A Jewiſh peaſant overthrew the religion of the world.

I have, nevertheleſs, placed the prevalency of the religion amongſt the auxiliary arguments of its truth; becauſe, whether it had prevailed or not, or whether its prevalency can or cannot be accounted for, the direct argument remains ſtill. It is ſtill true, that a great number of men upon the ſpot, perſonally connected with the hiſtory and with the author of the religion, were induced by what they heard and ſaw and knew, not only to change their former opinions, but to give up their time, and ſacrifice their eaſe to traverſe ſeas and kingdoms, without reſt, and without wearineſs, to commit themſelves to extreme dangers, to undertake inceſſant toils, to undergo grievous ſufferings, and all this, ſolely in conſequence, and in ſupport of their belief of facts, which, if true, eſtabliſh the truth of the religion, which, if falſe, they muſt have known to be ſo.

PART THE THIRD.

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

CHAP. I.

The Discrepancies between the several Gospels.

I KNOW not a more rash or more unphilosophical conduct of the understanding than to reject the substance of a story by reason of some diversity in the circumstances with which it is related. The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety. This is what the daily experience of courts of justice teaches. When accounts of a transaction come from the mouths of different witnesses, it is seldom that it is not possible to pick out apparent or real inconsistencies between them. These inconsistencies are studiously displayed by an adverse pleader, but oftentimes with little impression upon the minds of the judges. On the contrary, a close and minute agreement induces the suspicion of confederacy and fraud. When written histories touch upon the same scenes of action, the comparison almost always affords ground for a like reflection. Numerous, and sometimes important, variations present themselves; not seldom also, absolute and final contradictions; yet neither one nor the other are deemed sufficient to shake the credibility of the main fact. The embassy of the Jews to deprecate the execution of Claudian's order to place his statue in their temple, Philo places in harvest, Josephus in seed-time; both contemporary writers. No reader is led by this inconsistency to doubt, whether such an embassy was sent, or whether such an order was given. Our own history supplies examples of the same kind. In the account of the Marquis of Argyle's death in the reign of Charles the Second, we have a very remarkable contradiction. Lord Clarendon relates that he was condemned to be hanged, which was performed the same day: on the contrary, Burnet, Woodrow, Heath, Echard, agree that he was beheaded; and that he was condemned upon the Saturday, and executed upon the Monday.[a] Was any reader of English history ever

[a] See Biog. Britain.

ſceptic enough, to raiſe from hence a queſtion, whether the Marquis of Argyle was executed or not? Yet this ought to be left in uncertainty, according to the principles upon which the Chriſtian hiſtory has ſometimes been attacked. Dr. Middleton contended, that the different hours of the day aſſigned to the crucifixion of Chriſt by John and by the other evangeliſts, did not admit of the reconcilement which learned men had propoſed; and then concludes the diſcuſſion with this hard remark: "We muſt be forced, with ſeveral of the critics, to leave the difficulty juſt as we found it, chargeable with all the conſequences of manifeſt inconſiſtency."[a] But what are theſe conſequences? by no means the diſcrediting of the hiſtory as to the principal fact, by a repugnacy (even ſuppoſing that repugnancy not to be reſolvable into different modes of computation) in the time of the day, in which it is ſaid to have taken place.

A great deal of the diſcrepancy obſervable in the goſpels, ariſes from *omiſſion*; from a fact or a paſſage of Chriſt's life being noticed by one writer, which is unnoticed by another. Now omiſſion is at all times a very uncertain ground of objection. We perceive it, not only in the compariſon of different writers, but even in the ſame writer, when compared with himſelf. There are a great many particulars, and ſome of them of importance, mentioned by Joſephus in his Antiquities, which, as we ſhould have ſuppoſed, ought to have been put down by him in their place in his Jewiſh wars.[b] Suetonius, Tacitus, Dio Caſſius, have, all three, written of the reign of Tiberius. Each has mentioned many things omitted by the reſt,[c] yet no objection is from thence taken to the reſpective credit of their hiſtories. We have in our own times, if there were not ſomething indecorous in the compariſon, the life of an eminent perſon, written by three of his friends, in which there is very great variety in the incidents ſelected by them, ſome apparent, and perhaps ſome real contradictions; yet without any impeachment of the ſubſtantial truth of their accounts, of the authenticity of the books, the competent information or general fidelity of the writers.

But theſe diſcrepancies will be ſtill more numerous, when men do not write hiſtories, but *memoirs*; which is perhaps the true

[a] Middleton's Reflections anſwered by Benſon, Hiſt. Chriſ. vol. III. p. 50.

[b] Lard. part. I. vol. II. p. 755, et ſeq. [c] Ib. p. 743.

name, and proper description of our gospels: that is, when they do not undertake, or ever meant to deliver, in order of time, a regular and complete account of *all* the things of importance, which the person, who is the subject of their history, did or said; but only, out of many similar ones, to give such passages, or such actions and discourses, as offered themselves more immediately to their attention, came in the way of their inquiries, occurred to their recollection, or were suggested by their *particular design* at the time of writing.

This particular design may appear sometimes, but not always, nor often. Thus I think that the particular design, which St. Matthew had in view whilst he was writing the history of the resurrection, was to attest the faithful performance of Christ's promise to his disciples to go before them into Galilee; because he alone, except Mark, who seems to have taken it from him, has recorded this promise, and he alone has confined his narrative to that single appearance to the disciples which fulfilled it. It was the preconcerted, the great and most public manifestation of our Lord's person. It was the thing which dwelt upon St. Matthew's mind, and he adapted his narrative to it. But, that there is nothing in St. Matthew's language, which negatives other appearances, or which imports that this his appearance to his disciples in Galilee, in pursuance of his promise, was his first or only appearance, is made pretty evident by St. Mark's gospel, which used the same terms concerning the appearance in Galilee as St. Matthew uses, yet itself records two other appearances prior to this: "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee, then shall ye see him as he said unto you." (xvi. 7.) We might be apt to infer from these words, that this was the first time they were to see him: at least, we might infer it, with as much reason as we draw the inference from the same words in Matthew: yet the historian himself did not perceive that he was leading his readers to any such conclusion, for, in the twelfth and two following verses of this chapter, he informs us of two appearances, which, by comparing the order of events, are shown to have been prior to the appearance in Galilee. "He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and went into the country; and they went and told it unto the residue neither believed they them: afterwards he appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen."

Probably the ſame obſervation, concerning the *particular deſign* which guided the hiſtorian, may be of uſe in comparing many other paſſages of the goſpels.

CHAP. II.

Erroneous opinions imputed to the Apoſtles.

A SPECIES of candor which is ſhewn towards every other book, is ſometimes refuſed to the ſcriptures; and that is, the placing of a diſtinction between judgment and teſtimony. We do not uſually queſtion the credit of a writer, by reaſon of any opinion he may have delivered upon ſubjects unconnected with his evidence; and even upon ſubjects connected with his account, or mixed with it in the ſame diſcourſe or writing, we naturally ſeparate facts from opinions, teſtimony from obſervation, narrative from argument.

To apply this equitable conſideration to the Chriſtian records, much controverſy and much objection has been raiſed, concerning the quotations of the Old Teſtament found in the New; ſome of which quotations, it is ſaid, are applied in a ſenſe, and to events, apparently different from that which they bear, and from thoſe to which they belong, in the original. It is probable to my apprehenſion, that many of thoſe quotations were intended by the writers of the New Teſtament as nothing more than *accommodations*. They quoted paſſages of their ſcripture, which ſuited, and fell in with, the occaſion before them, without always undertaking to aſſert, that the occaſion was in the view of the author of the words. Such accommodations of paſſages from old authors, from books eſpecially which are in every one's hands, are common with writers of all countries; but in none, perhaps, were more to be expected, than in the writings of the Jews, whoſe literature was almoſt entirely confined to their ſcriptures. Thoſe prophecies which are alleged with more ſolemnity, and which are accompanied with a preciſe declaration, that they originally reſpected the event then related, are, I think, truly alleged. But were it otherwiſe; is the judgment of the writers of the New Teſtament, in interpreting paſſages of the Old, or ſometimes, perhaps, in receiving eſtabliſhed interpretations, ſo connected, either with their veracity, or with their means of information concerning what

was passing in their own times, as that a critical mistake, even were it clearly made out, should overthrow their historical credit?—Does it diminish it? Has it any thing to do with it?

Another error, imputed to the first Christians, was the expected approach of the day of judgment. I would introduce this objection, by a remark, upon what appears to me a somewhat similar example. Our Saviour, speaking to Peter of John, said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee."[a] These words, we find, had been so misconstrued, as that "a report" from thence, "went abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die." Suppose that this had come down to us amongst the prevailing opinions of the early Christians, and that the particular circumstance, from which the mistake sprung, had been lost, (which humanly speaking was most likely to have been the case) some, at this day would have been ready to regard and quote the error, as an impeachment of the whole Christian system. Yet with how little justice such a conclusion would have been drawn, or rather such a presumption taken up, the information which we happen to possess enables us now to perceive. To those who think that the scriptures lead us to believe, that the early Christians, and even the apostles, expected the approach of the day of judgment in their own times, the same reflection will occur, as that which we have made, with respect to the more partial perhaps and temporary, but still no less ancient error, concerning the duration of St. John's life. It was an error, it may be likewise said, which would effectually hinder those, who entertained it, from acting the part of impostors.

The difficulty which attends the subject of the present chapter, is contained in this question; if we once admit the fallibility of the apostolic judgment, where are we to stop, or in what can we rely upon it? To which questions, as arguing with unbelievers, and as arguing for the substantial truth of the Christian history, and for that alone, it is competent to the advocate of Christianity to reply, Give me the apostle's testimony, and I do not stand in need of their judgment; give me the facts, and I have complete security for every conclusion I want.

But, although I think, that it is competent to the Christian apologist to return this answer; I do not think that it is the only answer which the objection is capable of receiving. The two following cautions, founded, I apprehend, in the most rea-

[a] John xxi. 26.

ſonable diſtinctions, will exclude all uncertainty upon this head, which can be attended with danger.

Firſt, to ſeparate what was the object of the apoſtolic miſſion, and declared by them to be ſo, from what was extraneous to it, or only incidentally connected with it. Of points clearly extraneous to the religion, nothing need be ſaid. Of points incidentally connected with it, ſomething may be added: Demoniacal poſſeſſion is one of theſe points; concerning the reality of which, as this place will not admit the examination, or even the production of the arguments, on either ſide of the queſtion, it would be arrogance in me to deliver any judgment. And it is unneceſſary. For what I am concerned to obſerve is, that even they, who think that it was a general, but erroneous opinion, of thoſe times; and that the writers of the New Teſtament, in common with other Jewiſh writers of that age, fell into the manner of ſpeaking and of thinking upon the ſubject, which then univerſally prevailed; need not be alarmed by the conceſſion, as though they had any thing to fear from it, for the truth of Chriſtianity. The doctrine was not what Chriſt brought into the world. It appears in the Chriſtian records, incidentally and accidentally, as being the ſubſiſting opinion of the age and country in which his miniſtry was exerciſed. It was no part of the object of *his* revelation, to regulate men's opinions concerning the action of ſpiritual ſubſtances upon animal bodies. At any rate it is unconnected with teſtimony. If a dumb perſon was by a word reſtored to the uſe of his ſpeech, it ſignifies little to what cauſe the dumbneſs was aſcribed; and the like of every other cure, wrought upon thoſe who are ſaid to have been poſſeſſed. The malady was real, the cure was real, whether the popular explication of the cauſe was well founded or not. The matter of fact, the change, ſo far as it was an object of ſenſe, or of teſtimony, was in either caſe the ſame.

Secondly, that in reading the apoſtolic writings, we diſtinguiſh between their doctrines, and their arguments. Their doctrines came to them by revelation properly ſo called; yet in propounding theſe doctrines in their writings or diſcourſes, they were wont to illuſtrate, ſupport and enforce them, by ſuch analogies, arguments, and conſiderations, as their own thoughts ſuggeſted. Thus the call of the Gentiles, that is, the admiſſion of the Gentiles to the Chriſtian profeſſion without a previous ſubjection to the law of Moſes, was imparted to the apoſtles by revelation; and was atteſted by the miracles which attended the

Chriſtian miniſtry amongſt them. The apoſtles' own aſſurance of the matter reſted upon this foundation. Nevertheleſs, St. Paul, when treating of the ſubject, offers a great variety of topics in its proof and vindication. The doctrine itſelf muſt be received; but is it neceſſary, in order to defend Chriſtianity, to defend the propriety of every compariſon, or the validity of every argument, which the apoſtle has brought into the diſcuſſion? The ſame obſervation applies to ſome other inſtances; and is, in my opinion, very well founded. "When divine writers argue upon any point, we are always bound to believe the concluſions that their reaſonings end in, as parts of divine revelation; but we are not bound to be able to make out, or even to aſſent to, all the premiſes made uſe of by them, in their whole extent, unleſs it appear plainly, that they affirm the premiſes as expreſsly as they do the concluſions proved by them." [a]

CHAP. III.

The Connexion of Chriſtianity with the Jewiſh Hiſtory.

UNDOUBTEDLY, our Saviour aſſumes the divine origin of the Moſaic inſtitution; and, independently of his authority, I conceive it to be very difficult to aſſign any other cauſe for the commencement or exiſtence of that inſtitution; eſpecially for the ſingular circumſtance of the Jews adhering to the unity, when every other people ſlid into polytheiſm; for their being men in religion, children in every thing elſe; behind other nations in the arts of peace and war, ſuperior to the moſt improved in their ſentiments and doctrines relating to the Deity.[b] Undoubtedly alſo, our Saviour recogniſes the prophetic character of many of their ancient writers. So far, therefore, we are bound as Chriſtians to go. But to make Chriſtianity anſwerable with its life, for the circumſtantial truth of each ſeparate paſſage of

[a] Burnet's Expoſ. art. 6.

[b] "In the doctrine, for example, of the unity, the eternity, the omnipotence, the omniſcience, the omnipreſence, the wiſdom and the goodneſs of God; in their opinions concerning providence, and the creation, preſervation, and government of the world." Campbell on Mir. p. 207.

the Old Teſtament, the genuineneſs of every book, the information, fidelity, and judgment of every writer in it, is to bring, I will not ſay great, but unneceſſary, difficulties, into the whole ſyſtem. Theſe books were univerſally read and received by the Jews of our Saviour's time. He and his apoſtles, in common with all other Jews, referred to them, alluded to them, uſed them. Yet, except where he expreſsly aſcribes a divine authority to particular predictions, I do not know that we can ſtrictly draw any concluſion from the books being ſo uſed and applied, beſide the proof, which it unqueſtionably is, of their notoriety and reception at that time. In this view our ſcriptures afford a valuable teſtimony to thoſe of the Jews. But the nature of this teſtimony ought to be underſtood. It is ſurely very different from, what it is ſometimes repreſented to be, a ſpecific ratification of each particular fact and opinion; and not only of each particular fact, but of the motives aſſigned for every action, together with the judgment of praiſe or diſpraiſe beſtowed upon them. St. James, in his epiſtle,[a] ſays, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have ſeen the end of the Lord." Notwithſtanding this text, the reality of Job's hiſtory, and even the exiſtence of ſuch a perſon, has been always deemed a fair ſubject of inquiry and diſcuſſion amongſt Chriſtian divines. St. James's authority is conſidered as good evidence of the exiſtence of the book of Job at that time, and of its reception by the Jews, and of nothing more. St. Paul, in his ſecond epiſtle to Timothy,[b] has this ſimilitude, "Now, as Jannes and Jambres withſtood Moſes, ſo do theſe alſo reſiſt the truth." Theſe names are not found in the Old Teſtament. And it is uncertain, whether St. Paul took them from ſome apocryphal writing then extant, or from tradition. But no one ever imagined, that St. Paul is here aſſerting the authority of the writing, if it was a written account which he quoted, or making himſelf anſwerable for the authenticity of the tradition; much leſs, that he ſo involves himſelf with either of theſe queſtions, as that the credit of his own hiſtory and miſſion ſhould depend upon the fact, whether "Jannes and Jambres withſtood Moſes or not." For what reaſon a more rigorous interpretation ſhould be put upon other references, it is difficult to know. I do not mean, that other paſſages of the Jewiſh hiſtory ſtand upon no better evidence than the hiſtory of Job, or of Jannes and Jam-

[a] v. 11. [b] iii. 8.

bres, (I think much otherwiſe) but I mean, that a reference in the New Teſtament, to a paſſage in the Old, does not ſo fix its authority, as to exclude all inquiry into its credibility, or into the ſeparate reaſons upon which that credibility is founded; and that it is an unwarrantable, as well as unſafe rule to lay down concerning the Jewiſh hiſtory, what was never laid down concerning any other, that either every particular of it muſt be true, or the whole falſe.

I have thought it neceſſary to ſtate this point explicitly, becauſe a faſhion revived by Voltaire, and purſued by the diſciples of his ſchool, ſeems to have much prevailed of late, of attacking Chriſtianity through the ſides of Judaiſm. Some objections of this claſs are founded in miſconſtruction, ſome in exaggeration; but all proceed upon a ſuppoſition, which has not been made out by argument, that the atteſtation, which the author and firſt teachers of Chriſtianity gave to the divine miſſion of Moſes and the prophets, extends to every point and portion of the Jewiſh hiſtory; and ſo extends, as to make Chriſtianity reſponſible in its own credibility, for the circumſtantial truth, I had almoſt ſaid for the critical exactneſs, of every narrative contained in the Old Teſtament.

CHAP. IV.

Rejection of Chriſtianity.

WE acknowledge that the Chriſtian religion, although it converted great numbers, did not produce an univerſal, or even a general conviction in the minds of men, of the age and countries in which it appeared. And this want of a more complete and extenſive ſucceſs, is called the *rejection* of the Chriſtian hiſtory and miracles; and has been thought by ſome, to form a ſtrong objection to the reality of the facts which the hiſtory contains.

The matter of the objection divides itſelf into two parts, as it relates to the Jews, and as it relates to heathen nations; becauſe the minds of theſe two deſcriptions of men may have been, with reſpect to Chriſtianity, under the influence of very different cauſes. The caſe of the Jews, inaſmuch as our Saviour's miniſtry was originally addreſſed to them, offers itſelf firſt to our conſideration.

Now, upon the ſubject of the truth of the Chriſtian religion, with *us* there is but one queſtion, viz. whether the miracles were actually wrought? From acknowledging the miracles we paſs inſtantaneouſly to the acknowledgment of the whole. No doubt lies between the premiſes and the concluſion. If we believe the works, or any one of them, we believe in Jeſus. And this order of reaſoning is become ſo univerſal and familiar, that we do not readily apprehend how it could ever have been otherwiſe. Yet it appears to me perfectly certain, that the ſtate of thought, in the mind of a Jew of our Saviour's age, was totally different from this. After allowing the reality of the miracle, he had a great deal to do to perſuade himſelf that Jeſus was the Meſſiah. This is clearly intimated by various paſſages of the goſpel hiſtory. It appears that, in the apprehenſion of the writers of the New Teſtament, the miracles did not irreſiſtibly carry, even thoſe who ſaw them, to the concluſion intended to be drawn from them; or ſo compel aſſent, as to leave no room for ſuſpenſe, for the exerciſe of candour, or the effects of prejudice. And to this point at leaſt, the evangeliſts may be allowed to be good witneſſes; becauſe it is a point, in which exaggeration or diſguiſe would have been the other way. Their accounts, if they could be ſuſpected of falſehood, would rather have magnified, than diminiſhed, the effects of the miracles.

John vii. 21, 31. "Jeſus anſwered, and ſaid unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel—if a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumciſion, that the law of Moſes ſhould not be broken, are ye angry at me, becauſe I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance but judge righteous judgment. Then ſaid ſome of them of Jeruſalem, Is not this he whom they ſeek to kill? but lo, he ſpeaketh boldly, and they ſay nothing to him; do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Chriſt? *howbeit, we know this man whence he is; but, when Chriſt cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.* Then cried Jeſus in the temple as he taught, ſaying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am; and I am not come of myſelf, but he that ſent me is true, whom ye know not; but I know him, for I am from him, and he hath ſent me. Then they ſought to take him, but no man laid hands on him becauſe his hour was not yet come; *and many of the people believed on him, and ſaid, When Chriſt cometh, will he do more miracles than thoſe which this man hath done?*"

This paſſage is very obſervable. It exhibits the reaſoning of different ſorts of perſons upon the occaſion of a miracle, which perſons of all ſorts are repreſented to have acknowledged as real. One ſort of men thought, that there was ſomething very extraordinary in all this; but that ſtill Jeſus could not be the Chriſt, becauſe there was a circumſtance in his appearance, which militated with an opinion concerning Chriſt, in which they had been brought up, and of the truth of which, it is probable, they had never entertained a particle of doubt, viz. that "when Chriſt cometh no man knoweth whence he is." Another ſort were inclined to believe him to be the Meſſiah. But even theſe did not argue as we ſhould; did not conſider the miracle as of itſelf deciſive of the queſtion, as what, if once allowed, excluded all farther debate upon the ſubject, but founded their opinion upon a kind of comparative reaſoning, "when Chriſt cometh, will he do *more* miracles than thoſe which this man hath done?"

Another paſſage in the ſame evangeliſt, and obſervable for the ſame purpoſe, is that in which he relates the reſurrection of Lazarus: "Jeſus," he tells us, (xi. 43, 44) "when he had thus ſpoken, cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth; and he, that was dead, came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jeſus ſaith unto them, Looſe him and let him go." One might have expected, that at leaſt all thoſe who ſtood by the ſepulchre, when Lazarus was raiſed, would have believed in Jeſus. Yet the evangeliſt does not ſo repreſent it. "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had ſeen the things which Jeſus did, believed on him; but *ſome of them* went their ways to the Phariſees, and told them what things Jeſus had done." We cannot ſuppoſe that the evangeliſt meant, by this account, to leave his readers to imagine that any of the ſpectators doubted about the truth of the miracle. Far from it. Unqueſtionably he ſtates the miracle to have been fully allowed: yet the perſons who allowed it, were, according to his repreſentation, capable of retaining hoſtile ſentiments towards Jeſus. "Believing in Jeſus" was not only to believe that he wrought miracles, but that he was the Meſſiah. With us there is no difference between theſe two things; with them there was the greateſt. And the difference is apparent in this tranſaction. If St. John has repreſented the conduct of the Jews upon this occaſion truly, (and why he ſhould not I cannot tell, for it rather makes

againſt him than for him) it ſhews clearly the principles upon which their judgment proceeded. Whether he has related the matter truly or not, the relation itſelf diſcovers the writer's own opinion of thoſe principles, and that alone poſſeſſes conſiderable authority. In the next chapter, we have a reflection of the evangeliſt, entirely ſuited to this ſtate of the caſe; "but though he had done ſo many miracles before them, yet believed they not on him."[a] The evangeliſt does not mean to impute the defect of their belief to any doubt about the miracles, but to their not perceiving, what all now ſufficiently perceive, and what they would have perceived had not their underſtandings been governed by ſtrong prejudices, the infallible atteſtation, which the works of Jeſus bore, to the truth of his pretenſions.

The ninth chapter of St. John's goſpel contains a very circumſtantial account of the cure of a blind man; a miracle ſubmitted to all the ſcrutiny and examination which a ſceptic could propoſe. If a modern unbeliever had drawn up the interrogatories, they could hardly have been more critical or ſearching. The account contains alſo a very curious conference between the Jewiſh rulers and the patient, in which the point for our preſent notice, is their reſiſtance of the force of the miracle, and of the concluſion to which it led, after they had failed in diſcrediting its evidence. "We know that God ſpake unto Moſes, but as for this fellow we know not whence he is." That was the anſwer which ſet their minds at reſt. And by the help of much prejudice, and great unwillingneſs to yield, it might do ſo. In the mind of the poor man reſtored to ſight, which was under no ſuch bias, felt no ſuch reluctance, the miracle had its natural operation. "Herein," ſays he, "is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not ſinners; but if any man be a worſhipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God he could do nothing." We do not find that the Jewiſh rulers had any other reply to make to this defence, than that which authority is ſometimes apt to make to argument, "Doſt thou teach us?"

If it ſhall be inquired how a return of thought, ſo different from what prevails at preſent, ſhould obtain currency with the

[a] xii. 37.

ancient Jews, the anſwer is found in two opinions, which are proved to have ſubſiſted in that age and country. The one was, their expectation of a Meſſiah, of a kind totally contrary to what the appearance of Jeſus beſpoke him to be: the other, their perſuaſion of the agency of demons in the production of ſupernatural effects. Theſe opinions are not *ſuppoſed* by us for the purpoſe of argument, but are evidently recognized in the Jewiſh writings, as well as in ours. And it ought moreover to be conſidered, that in theſe opinions the Jews of that age had been from their infancy brought up; that they were opinions, the grounds of which they had probably few of them inquired into, and of the truth of which they entertained no doubt. And I think that theſe two opinions conjointly afford an explanation of their conduct. The firſt put them upon ſeeking out ſome excuſe to themſelves, for not receiving Jeſus in the character in which he claimed to be received; and the ſecond ſupplied them with juſt ſuch an excuſe as they wanted. Let Jeſus work what miracles he would, ſtill the anſwer was in readineſs, "that he wrought them by the aſſiſtance of Beelzebub." And to this anſwer no reply could be made, but that which our Saviour did make, by ſhowing that the tendency of his miſſion was ſo adverſe to the views with which this being was, by the objectors themſelves, ſuppoſed to act, that it could not reaſonably be ſuppoſed that he would aſſiſt in carrying it on. The power diſplayed in the miracles did not alone refute the Jewiſh ſolution, becauſe, the interpoſition of inviſible agents being once admitted, it is impoſſible to aſcertain the limits by which their efficiency is circumſcribed. We of this day may be diſpoſed, poſſibly, to think ſuch opinions too abſurd, to have been ever ſeriouſly entertained. I am not bound to contend for the credibility of the opinions. They were at leaſt as reaſonable as the belief in witchcraft. They were opinions in which the Jews of that age had from their infancy been inſtructed: and thoſe who cannot ſee enough in the force of this reaſon, to account for their conduct towards our Saviour, do not ſufficiently conſider how ſuch opinions may ſometimes become very general in a country, and with what pertinacity, when once become ſo, they are, for that reaſon alone, adhered to. In the ſuſpenſe which theſe notions, and the prejudices reſulting from them, might occaſion, the candid and docile and humble-minded would probably decide in Chriſt's favor; the proud and obſtinate, together with the giddy and the thoughtleſs, almoſt univerſally againſt him.

This ſtate of opinion diſcovers to us alſo the reaſon of what ſome chooſe to wonder at, why the Jews ſhould reject miracles when they ſaw them, yet rely ſo much upon the tradition of them in their own hiſtory. It does not appear, that it had ever entered into the minds of thoſe who lived in the time of Moſes and the prophets, to aſcribe *their* miracles to the ſupernatural agency of evil beings. The ſolution was not then invented. And the authority of Moſes and the prophets being eſtabliſhed, and become the foundation of the national policy and religion, it was not probable that the later Jews, brought up in a reverence for that religion, and the ſubjects of that policy, ſhould apply to their hiſtory a reaſoning which tended to overthrow the foundation of both.

II. The infidelity of the Gentile world, and that more eſpecially of men of rank and learning in it, is reſolvable into a principle, which, in my judgment, will account for the inefficacy of any argument or any evidence whatever, viz. contempt prior to examination. The ſtate of religion amongſt the Greeks and Romans had a natural tendency to induce this diſpoſition. Dionyſius Halicarneſſenſis remarks, that there were ſix hundred different kinds of religions or ſacred rites exerciſed at Rome.[a] The ſuperior claſſes of the community treated them all as fables. Can we wonder then, that Chriſtianity was included in the number, without inquiry into its ſeparate merits, or the particular grounds of its pretenſions? It might be either true or falſe for any thing they knew about it. The religion had nothing in its character which immediately engaged their notice. It mixed with no politics. It produced no fine writers. It contained no curious ſpeculations. When it did reach their knowledge, I doubt not but that it appeared to them a very ſtrange ſyſtem—ſo unphiloſophical—dealing ſo little in argument and diſcuſſion, however in ſuch arguments and diſcuſſions as they were accuſtomed to entertain. What is ſaid of Jeſus Chriſt, of his nature, office and miniſtry, would be, in the higheſt degree, alien from the conceptions of their theology. The Redeemer, and the deſtined Judge of the human race, a poor young man executed at Jeruſalem with two thieves upon a croſs! Still more, the language in which the Chriſtian doctrine was delivered, would be diſſonant and barbarous to their ears. What knew they of grace, of redemption, of juſtification, of the blood

[a] Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hiſt. vol. i. p. 371.

of Chriſt ſhed for the ſins of men, of reconcilement, of mediation? Chriſtianity was made up of points they had never thought of, of terms which they had never heard.

It was preſented alſo to the imagination of the learned heathen, under additional diſadvantage, by reaſon of its real, and ſtill more of its nominal, connexion with Judaiſm. It ſhared in the obloquy and ridicule, with which that people and their religion were treated by the Greeks and Romans. They regarded Jehovah himſelf only as the idol of the Jewiſh nation, and what was related of him, as of a piece with what was told of the tutelar deities of other countries; nay, the Jews were in a particular manner ridiculed for being a credulous race; ſo that whatever reports of a miraculous nature came out of that country, were looked upon by the heathen world as falſe and frivolous. When they heard of Chriſtianity, they heard of it as a quarrel amongſt this people, about ſome articles of their own ſuperſtition. Deſpiſing, therefore, as they did, the whole ſyſtem, it was not probable that they would enter, with any degree of ſerioufneſs or attention, into the detail of its diſputes or the merits of either ſide. How little they knew, and with what careleſsneſs they judged of theſe matters, appears, I think, pretty plainly from an example of no leſs weight than that of Tacitus, who in a grave and profeſſed diſcourſe upon the hiſtory of the Jews, ſtates that they worſhipped the effigy of an aſs.[a] The paſſage is a proof, how prone the learned men of theſe times were, and upon how little evidence, to heap together ſtories, which might increaſe the contempt and odium in which that people was held. The ſame fooliſh charge is alſo confidently repeated by Plutarch.[b]

It is obſervable, that all theſe conſiderations are of a nature to operate with the greateſt force upon the higheſt ranks; upon men of education, and that order of the public from which *writers* are principally taken. I may add alſo, upon the philoſophical as well as the libertine character; upon the Antonines or Julian, not leſs than upon Nero or Domitian; and, more particularly, upon that large and poliſhed claſs of men, who acquieſced in the general perſuaſion, that all they had to do was to practiſe the duties of morality, and to worſhip the Deity *more patrio*; a habit of thinking, liberal as it may appear, which ſhuts the door againſt every argument for a new religion. The conſider-

[a] Tac. hiſt. l. v. c. 2. [b] Sympoſ. lib. 4. queſ. 5.

ations above mentioned, would acquire alſo ſtrength, from the prejudice which men of rank and learning univerſally entertain againſt any thing that originates with the vulgar and illiterate; which prejudice is known to be as obſtinate as any prejudice whatever.

Yet Chriſtianity was ſtill making its way: and, amidſt ſo many impediments to its progreſs, ſo much difficulty in procuring audience and attention, its actual ſucceſs is more to be wondered at, than that it ſhould not have univerſally conquered ſcorn and indifference, fixed the levity of a voluptuous age, or, through a cloud of adverſe prejudications, opened for itſelf a paſſage to the hearts and underſtandings of the ſcholars of the age.

And the cauſe which is here aſſigned for the rejection of Chriſtianity, by men of rank and learning among the heathens, namely, a ſtrong antecedent contempt, accounts alſo for their *ſilence* concerning it. If they had rejected it upon examination, they would have written about it. They would have given their reaſons. Whereas what men repudiate upon the ſtrength of ſome prefixed perſuaſion, or from a ſettled contempt of the ſubject, of the perſons who propoſe it, or of the manner in which it is propoſed, they do not naturally write books about, or notice much in what they write upon other ſubjects.

The letters of the younger Pliny furniſh an example of this ſilence, and let us, in ſome meaſure, into the cauſe of it. From his celebrated correſpondence with Trajan, we know that the Chriſtian religion prevailed in a very conſiderable degree in the province over which he preſided; that it had excited his attention; that he had inquired into the matter, juſt ſo much as a Roman magiſtrate might be expected to inquire, viz. whether the religion contained any opinions dangerous to government; but that of its doctrines, its evidences, or its books, he had not taken the trouble to inform himſelf with any degree of care or correctneſs. But although Pliny had viewed Chriſtianity in a nearer poſition, than moſt of his learned countrymen ſaw it in; yet he had regarded the whole with ſuch negligence and diſdain, (farther than as it ſeemed to concern his adminiſtration) that, in more than two hundred and forty letters of his which have come down to us, the ſubject is never once again mentioned. If out of this number the two letters between him and Trajan had been loſt, with what confidence would the obſcurity of the Chriſtian religion have been argued from Pliny's ſilence about it, and with how little truth?

The name and character, which Tacitus hath given to Chriſtianity, "exitiabilis ſuperſtitio," (a pernicious ſuperſtition) and by which two words he diſpoſes of the whole queſtion of the merits or demerits of the religion, afford a ſtrong proof how little he knew, or concerned himſelf to know, about the matter. I apprehend that I ſhall not be contradicted, when I take upon me to aſſert, that no unbeliever of the preſent age would apply this epithet to the Chriſtianity of the New Teſtament, or not allow that it was entirely unmerited. Read the inſtructions given, by a great teacher of the religion, to thoſe very Roman converts, of whom Tacitus ſpeaks; and given alſo a very few years before the time of which he is ſpeaking; and which are not, let it be obſerved, a collection of fine ſayings, brought together from different parts of a large work, but ſtand in one entire paſſage of a public letter, without the intermixture of a ſingle thought, which is frivolous or exceptionable. "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. Not ſlothful in buſineſs, fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing inſtant in prayer, diſtributing to the neceſſity of ſaints, given to hoſpitality. Bleſs them which perſecute you; bleſs, and curſe not; rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the ſame mind one towards another: mind not high things, but condeſcend to men of low eſtate. Be not wiſe in your own conceits. Recompenſe to no man evil for evil. Provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men. If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourſelves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, ſaith the Lord: therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink; for, in ſo doing, thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

"Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God; whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God, and they that reſiſt ſhall receive unto themſelves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame, for he is the miniſter of God to thee for good: but if thou do

that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake: for, for this cause, pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law: for this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

"And that, knowing the time, that now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."[a]

Read this, and then think of exitiabilis superstitio!!—Or if we be not allowed, in contending with heathen authorities, to produce our books against theirs, we may at least be permitted to confront theirs with one another. Of this "pernicious superstition," what could *Pliny* find to blame, when he was led by his office, to institute something like an examination into the conduct and principles of the sect? He discovered nothing, but that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves a hymn to Christ as a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but not to be guilty of theft, robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it.

Upon the words of Tacitus we may build the following observations:

First, That we are well warranted in calling the view, under which the learned men of that age beheld Christianity, an obscure and distant view. Had Tacitus known more of Christian-

[a] Rom. xii. 9. xiii. 13.

ity, of its precepts, duties, conſtitution, or deſign, however he had diſcredited the ſtory, he would have reſpected the principle. He would have deſcribed the religion differently, though he had rejected it. It has been very ſatisfactorily ſhown, that the "ſuperſtition" of the Chriſtians conſiſted in worſhipping a perſon unknown to the Roman calendar; and that the perniciouſneſs with which they were reproached, was nothing elſe but their oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed polytheiſm: and this view of the matter, was juſt ſuch a one as might be expected to occur to a mind, which held the ſect in too much contempt to concern itſelf about the grounds and reaſons of their conduct.

Secondly, We may from hence remark, how little reliance can be placed upon the moſt acute judgments, in ſubjects which they are pleaſed to deſpiſe; and which, of courſe, they from the firſt conſider as unworthy to be inquired into. Had not Chriſtianity ſurvived to tell its own ſtory, it muſt have gone down to poſterity as a "pernicious ſuperſtition;" and that upon the credit of Tacitus's account, much, I doubt not, ſtrengthened by the name of the writer, and the reputation of his ſagacity.

Thirdly, That this contempt prior to examination, is an intellectual vice, from which the greateſt faculties of mind are not free. I know not, indeed, whether men of the greateſt faculties of mind are not the moſt ſubject to it. Such men feel themſelves ſeated upon an eminence. Looking down from their height upon the follies of mankind, they behold contending tenets waſting thier idle ſtrength upon one another, with a common diſdain of the abſurdity of them all. This habit of thought, however comfortable to the mind which entertains it, or however natural to great parts, is extremely dangerous; and more apt than almoſt any other diſpoſition to produce haſty and contemptuous, and, by conſequence, erroneous judgments, both of perſons and opinions.

Fourthly, We need not be ſurpriſed at many writers of that age not mentioning Chriſtianity at all, when they who did mention it appear to have entirely miſconceived its nature and character; and, in conſequence of that miſconception, to have regarded it with negligence and contempt.

To the knowledge of the greateſt part of the learned heathens, the facts of the Chriſtian hiſtory could only come by report. The books, probably, they had never looked into. The ſettled habit of their minds was, and long had been, an indiſcriminate rejection of all reports of the kind. With theſe ſweeping con-

cluſions truth hath no chance. It depends upon diſtinction. If they would not inquire, how ſhould they be convinced? It might be founded in truth, though they who made no ſearch might not diſcover it.

"Men of rank and fortune, of wit and abilities, are often found, even in Chriſtian countries, to be ſurpriſingly ignorant of religion, and of every thing that relates to it. Such were many of the heathens. Their thoughts were all fixed upon other things, upon reputation and glory, upon wealth and power, upon luxury and pleaſure, upon buſineſs or learning. They thought, and they had reaſon to think, that the religion of their country was fable and forgery, an heap of inconſiſtent lies, which inclined them to ſuppoſe that other religions were no better. Hence it came to paſs, that when the apoſtles preached the goſpel, and wrought miracles in confirmation of a doctrine every way worthy of God, many Gentiles knew little or nothing of it, and would not take the leaſt pains to inform themſelves about it. This appears plainly from ancient hiſtory."[a]

I think it by no means unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the heathen public, eſpecially that part which is made up of men of rank and education, were divided into two claſſes; thoſe who deſpiſed Chriſtianity beforehand, and thoſe who received it. In correſpondency with which diviſion of character, the writers of that age would alſo be of two claſſes, thoſe who were ſilent about Chriſtianity, and thoſe who were Chriſtians. "A good man, who attended ſufficiently to the Chriſtian affairs, would become a Chriſtian; after which his teſtimony ceaſed to be pagan, and became Chriſtian."[b]

I muſt alſo add, that I think it ſufficiently proved, that the notion of magic was reſorted to by the heathen adverſaries of Chriſtianity, in like manner as that of diabolical agency had before been by the Jews. Juſtin Martyr alleges this as his reaſon for arguing from prophecy rather than from miracles. Origen imputes this evaſion to Celſus; Jerome to Porphyry; and Lactantius to the heathen in general. The ſeveral paſſages which contain theſe teſtimonies will be produced in the next chapter. It being difficult however to aſcertain in what degree this notion prevailed, eſpecially amongſt the ſuperior ranks of the heathen communities, another, and I think an adequate cauſe, has been aſſigned for their infidelity. It is probable that in many caſes the two cauſes would operate together.

[a] Jortin's Diſ. on the Chriſ. Rel. p. 66. ed. 4th. [b] Hartley Obſ. p. 119

CHAP. V.

That the Chriſtian miracles are not recited, or appealed to, by early Chriſtian writers themſelves, ſo fully or frequently as might have been expected.

I SHALL conſider this objection, firſt, as it applies to the letters of the apoſtles, preſerved in the New Teſtament; and ſecondly, as it applies to the remaining writings of other early Chriſtians.

The epiſtles of the apoſtles are either hortatory or argumentative. So far as they were occupied in delivering leſſons of duty, rules of public order, admonitions againſt certain prevailing corruptions, againſt vice, or any particular ſpecies of it, or in fortifying and encouraging the conſtancy of the diſciples under the trials to which they were expoſed, there appears to be no place or occaſion for more of theſe references than we actually find.

So far as the epiſtles are argumentative, the nature of the argument which they handle, accounts for the infrequency of theſe alluſions. Theſe epiſtles were not written to prove the truth of Chriſtianity. The ſubject under conſideration was not that which the miracles decided, the reality of our Lord's miſſion; but it was that which the miracles did not decide, the nature of his perſon or power, the deſign of his advent, its effects, and of thoſe effects the value, kind, and extent. Still I maintain, that miraculous evidence lies at the bottom of the argument. For nothing could be ſo prepoſterous, as for the diſciples of Jeſus to diſpute amongſt themſelves, or with others, concerning his office or character, unleſs they believed that he had ſhown, by ſupernatural proofs, that there was ſomething extraordinary in both. Miraculous evidence, therefore, forming not the texture of theſe arguments, but the ground and ſubſtratum, if it be occaſionally diſcerned, if it be incidentally appealed to, it is exactly ſo much as ought to take place, ſuppoſing the hiſtory to be true.

As a further anſwer to the objection, that the apoſtolic epiſtles do not contain ſo frequent or ſuch direct and circumſtantial recitals of miracles as might be expected, I would add, that the apoſtolic epiſtles reſemble in this reſpect the apoſtolic ſpeeches, which ſpeeches are given by a writer, who diſtinctly records

numerous miracles, wrought by these apostles themselves, and by the founder of the institution in their presence; that it is unwarrantable to contend, that the omission or infrequency of such recitals in the speeches of the apostles, negatives the existence of the miracles, when the speeches are given in immediate conjunction with the history of those miracles; and that a conclusion which cannot be inferred from the speeches, without contradicting the whole tenor of the book which contains them, cannot be inferred from letters, which, in this respect, are similar only to the speeches.

To prove the similitude which we allege, it may be remarked, that although in St. Luke's gospel, the apostle Peter is represented to have been present at many decisive miracles wrought by Christ; and although the second part of the same history ascribes other decisive miracles to Peter himself, particularly the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple, (Acts iii. 1)—the death of Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts v. 1)—the cure of Æneas, (Acts ix. 40)—the resurrection of Dorcas: (Acts ix. 34)—yet out of six speeches of Peter, preserved in the Acts, I know but two, in which reference is made to the miracles wrought by Christ, and only one in which he refers to miraculous powers possessed by himself. In his speech upon the day of Pentecost, Peter addresses his audience with great solemnity thus: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know,"[a] &c. In his speech upon the conversion of Cornelius, he delivers his testimony to the miracles performed by Christ in these words: "We are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem."[b] But in this latter speech no allusion appears to the miracles wrought by himself, notwithstanding that the miracles above enumerated, all preceded the time in which it was delivered. In his speech upon the election of Matthias,[c] no distinct reference is made to any of the miracles of Christ's history, except his resurrection. The same also may be observed of his speech upon the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple;[d] the same in his speech before the Sanhedrim;[e] the same in his second apology in the presence of that assembly. Stephen's long

[a] Acts ii. 22. [b] Ib. x. 39. [c] Acts i. 15.
[d] Acts iii. 12. [e] iv. 9.

ſpeech contains no reference whatever to miracles, though it be expreſsly related of him, in the book which preſerves the ſpeech, and almoſt immediately before the ſpeech, "that he did great wonders and miracles among the people."[a] Again, although miracles be expreſsly attributed to St. Paul in the Acts of the apoſtles, firſt generally as at Iconium—(Acts xiv. 3)—during the whole tour through the Upper Aſia—(xiv. 27. xv. 12)—at Epheſus;—(xix. 11, 12)—ſecondly, in ſpecific inſtances, as the blindneſs of Elymas at Paphos,[b] the cure of the cripple at Lyſtra,[c] of the Pythoneſs at Philippi,[d] the miraculous liberation from priſon in the ſame city,[e] the reſtoration of Eutychus,[f] the predictions of his ſhipwreck,[g] the viper at Melita,[h] the cure of Publius's father;[i] at all which miracles, except the two firſt, the hiſtorian himſelf was preſent; notwithſtanding, I ſay, this poſitive aſcription of miracles to St. Paul, yet in the ſpeeches delivered by him, and given as delivered by him, in the ſame book in which the miracles are related, and the miraculous powers aſſerted, the appeals to his own miracles, or indeed to any miracles at all, are rare and incidental. In his ſpeech at Antioch in Piſidia,[k] there is no alluſion, but to the reſurrection. In his diſcourſe at Miletus[l] none to any miracle: none in his ſpeech before Felix;[m] none in his ſpeech before Feſtus;[n] except to Chriſt's reſurrection and his own converſion.

Agreeably hereunto, in thirteen letters aſcribed to St. Paul, we have inceſſant references to Chriſt's reſurrection, frequent references to his own converſion, three indubitable references to the miracles which he wrought,[o] four other references to the ſame, leſs direct yet highly probable;[p] but more copious or circumſtantial recitals we have not. The conſent therefore, between St. Paul's ſpeeches and letters, is in this reſpect ſufficiently exact: and the reaſon in both is the ſame; namely, that the miraculous hiſtory was all along preſuppoſed, and that the queſtion, which occupied the ſpeaker's and the writer's thoughts was this; whether, allowing the hiſtory of Jeſus to be true, he was upon the ſtrength of it to be received as the promiſed

a vi. 8. b xiii. 7. c xiv. 8. d xvi. 16. e xvi. 26.
f xx. 10. g xxvii. 1. h xxviii. 6. i xxviii. 8.
k xiii. 16. l xx. 17. m xxiv. 10. n xxv. 8.
o Gal. iii. 5. Rom. xv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 12.
p 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. Eph. iii. 7. Gal. ii 8. 1 Theſſ. i. 5.

Meſſiah; and if he was, what were the conſequences, what was the object and benefit of his miſſion?

The general obſervation which has been made upon the apoſtolic writings, namely, that the ſubject, of which they treated, did not lead them to any direct recital of the Chriſtian hiſtory, belongs alſo to the writings of the apoſtolic fathers. The epiſtle of Barnabas is, in its ſubject and general compoſition, much like the epiſtle to the Hebrews; an allegorical application of divers paſſages of the Jewiſh hiſtory, of their law and ritual, to thoſe parts of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, in which the author perceived a reſemblance. The epiſtle of Clement was written, for the ſole purpoſe of quieting certain diſſenſions that had ariſen amongſt the members of the church of Corinth; and of reviving, in their minds, that temper and ſpirit of which their predeceſſors in the goſpel had left them an example. The work of Hermas is a viſion; quotes neither the Old Teſtament nor the New; and merely falls now and then into the language, and the mode of ſpeech, which the author had read in our goſpels. The epiſtles of Polycarp and Ignatius had, for their principal object, the order and diſcipline of the churches which they addreſſed. Yet, under all theſe circumſtances of diſadvantage, the great points of the Chriſtian hiſtory are fully recognized. This hath been ſhown its proper place.[a]

There is, however, another claſs of writers, to whom the anſwer above given, viz. the unſuitableneſs of any ſuch appeals or references as the objection demands: to the ſubjects of which the writings treated, does not apply; and that is, the claſs of ancient *apologiſts*, whoſe declared deſign it was, to defend Chriſtianity, and to give the reaſons of their own adherence to it. It is neceſſary, therefore, to inquire how the matter of the objection ſtands in theſe.

The moſt ancient apologiſt, of whoſe works we have the ſmalleſt knowledge, is Quadratus, who lived about ſeventy years after the aſcenſion, and preſented his apology to the emperor Adrian. From a paſſage of this work, preſerved in Euſebius, it appears that the author did directly and formally appeal to the miracles of Chriſt, and in terms as expreſs and confident as we could deſire. The paſſage (which has been once already ſtated) is as follows: "The works of our Saviour were always conſpicuous, for they were real: both they that were healed, and

[a] P. 72—74.

they that were raiſed from the dead, were ſeen, not only when they were healed or raiſed, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilſt he dwelled on this earth, but alſo after his departure, and for a good while after it; inſomuch as that ſome of them have reached to our times."[a] Nothing can be more rational or ſatisfactory than this.

Juſtin Martyr, the next of the Chriſtian apologiſts whoſe work is not loſt, and who followed Quadratus at the diſtance of about thirty years, has touched upon paſſages of Chriſt's hiſtory in ſo many places, that a tolerably complete account of Chriſt's life might be collected out of his works. In the following quotation, he aſſerts the performance of miracles by Chriſt, in words as ſtrong and poſitive as the language poſſeſſes: "Chriſt healed thoſe who from their birth were blind, and deaf, and lame; cauſing, by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to ſee; and having raiſed the dead, and cauſed them to live, he by his works excited attention, and induced the men of that age to know him. Who, however, ſeeing theſe things done, ſaid that it was a magical appearance; and dared to call him a magician, and a deceiver of the people."[b]

In his firſt apology,[c] Juſtin expreſsly aſſigns the reaſon for his having recourſe to the argument from prophecy, rather than alleging the miracles of the Chriſtian hiſtory: which reaſon was, that the perſons with whom he contended would aſcribe theſe miracles to magic; "leſt any of our opponents ſhould ſay, what hinders, but that he who is called Chriſt by us, being a man ſprung from men, performed the miracles which we attributed to him by magical art." The ſuggeſting of this reaſon meets, as I apprehend, the very point of the preſent objection; more eſpecially when we find Juſtin followed in it, by other writers of that age. Irenæus, who came about forty years after him, notices the ſame evaſion in the adverſaries of Chriſtianity, and replies to it by the ſame argument: "But, if they ſhall ſay, that the Lord performed theſe things by an illuſory appearance, (φανταστικῶς) leading theſe objectors to the prophecies, we will ſhow from them that all things were thus predicted concerning him, and ſtrictly came to paſs."[d] Lactantius, who lived a century lower, delivers the ſame ſentiment, upon the ſame occaſion. "He performed miracles—we might have ſuppoſed him to have

[a] Euſ. Hiſt. l. iv. c. 3. [b] Juſt. Dial. p. 258. ed. Thirlby.
[c] Ap. Prim. p. 48. ib. [d] Ir. l. ii. c. 57.

been a magician, as ye say, and as the Jews then supposed, if all the prophets had not with one spirit foretold, that Christ would perform these very things."[a]

But to return to the Christian apologists in their order; Tertullian—"That person, whom the Jews had vainly imagined, from the meanness of his appearance, to be a mere man, they afterwards, in consequence of the power he exerted, considered as a magician, when he, with one word, ejected devils out of the bodies of men, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the leprous, strengthened the nerves of those that had the palsy, and lastly, with one command, restored the dead to life; when he, I say, made the very elements obey him, assuaged the storms, walked upon the seas, demonstrating himself to be the word of God."[b]

Next in the catalogue of professed apologists we may place Origen, who, it is well known, published a formal defence of Christianity, in answer to Celsus, a heathen, who had written a discourse against it. I know no expressions, by which a plainer or more positive appeal to the Christian miracles could be made, than the expressions used by Origen: "Undoubtedly we do think him to be the Christ, and the Son of God, because he healed the lame and the blind; and we are the more confirmed in this persuasion, by what is written in the prophecies, Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear, and the lame men shall leap as an hart. But that he also raised the dead, and that it is not a fiction of those who wrote the gospels, is evident from hence, that, if it had been a fiction, there would have been many recorded to be raised up, and such as had been a long time in their graves. But, it not being a fiction, few have been recorded; for instance, the daughter of the ruler of a synagogue, of whom I do not know why he said, She is not dead but sleepeth, expressing something peculiar to her, not common to all dead persons; and the only son of a widow, on whom he had compassion and raised to life, after he had bid the bearer of the corpse to stop; and the third, Lazarus, who had been buried four days." This is positive to assert the miracles of Christ, and it is also to comment upon them, and that with a considerable degree of accuracy and candour.

[a] Lact. v. 3.

[b] Tertull. Apolog. p 20. ed. Priorii Par. 1675.

In another paſſage of the ſame author,[a] we meet with the old ſolution of magic, applied to the miracles of Chriſt by the adverſaries of the religion. "Celſus," ſaith Origen, "well knowing what great works may be alleged to have been done by Jeſus, pretends to grant that the things related of him are true; ſuch as healing diſeaſes, raiſing the dead, feeding multitudes with a few loaves, of which large fragments were left." And then Celſus gives, it ſeems, an anſwer to theſe proofs of our Lord's miſſion, which, as Origen underſtood it, reſolved the phenomena into magic; for Origen begins his reply, by obſerving, "You ſee that Celſus, in a manner allows that there is ſuch a thing as magic."[b]

It appears alſo from the teſtimony of St. Jerome, that Porphyry, the moſt learned and able of the heathen writers againſt Chriſtianity, reſorted to the ſame ſolution: "Unleſs," ſays he, ſpeaking to Vigilantius, "according to the manner of the Gentiles, and the profane, of *Porphyry* and Eunomius, you pretend that theſe are the tricks of demons."[c]

This magic, theſe demons, this illuſory appearance, this compariſon with the tricks of jugglers, by which many of that age accounted ſo eaſily for the Chriſtian miracles, and which anſwers the advocates of Chriſtianity often thought it neceſſary to refute by arguments drawn from other topics, and particularly from prophecy, to which, it ſeems, theſe ſolutions did not apply, we now perceive to be groſs ſubterfuges. That ſuch reaſons were ever ſeriouſly urged, and ſeriouſly received, is only a proof what a gloſs and varniſh faſhion can give to any opinion.

It appears, therefore, that the miracles of Chriſt, underſtood, as we underſtand them, in their literal and hiſtorical ſenſe, were poſitively and preciſely aſſerted and appealed to by the apologiſts for Chriſtianity; which anſwers the allegation of the objection.

I am ready, however, to admit, that the ancient Chriſtian advocates did not inſiſt upon the miracles in argument, ſo frequently as I ſhould have done. It was their lot to contend with notions of magical agency, againſt which the mere production of the facts was not ſufficient for the convincing of their adverſaries: I do not know whether they themſelves thought

[a] Or. Con. Celſ. lib. ii. ſec. 48.

[b] Lard. Jewiſh and Heath. Teſt. vol. II. p. 294, ed. quarto.

[c] Jerome Con. Vigil.

it quite decisive of the controversy. But since it is proved, I conceive with certainty, that the sparingness with which they appealed to miracles, was owing neither to their ignorance, nor their doubt of the facts, it is, at any rate, an objection, not to the truth of the history, but to the judgment of its defenders.

CHAP. VI.

Want of universality in the knowledge and reception of Christianity, and of greater clearness in the evidence.

OF a revelation which came from God, the proof, it has been said, would in all ages be so public and manifest, that no part of the human species would remain ignorant of it, no understanding could fail of being convinced by it.

The advocates of Christianity do not pretend that the evidence of their religion possesses these qualities. They do not deny, that we can conceive it to be within the compass of divine power, to have communicated to the world a higher degree of assurance, and to have given to his communication a stronger and more extensive influence. For any thing we are able to discern, God *could* have so formed men, as to have perceived the truths of religion intuitively; or to have carried on a communication with the other world, whilst they lived in this; or to have seen the individuals of the species, instead of dying, pass to heaven by a sensible translation. He could have presented a separate miracle to each man's senses. He could have established a standing miracle. He could have caused miracles to be wrought in every different age and country. These, and many more methods, which we may imagine, if we once give loose to our imaginations, are, so far as we can judge, all practicable.

The question, therefore, is not, whether Christianity possesses the highest possible degree of evidence, but whether the not having more evidence, be a sufficient reason for rejecting that which we have.

Now there appears to be no fairer method of judging, concerning any dispensation which is alleged to come from God, when a question is made whether such a dispensation could come from God or not, than by comparing it with other things, which are acknowledged to proceed from the same council, and to be

produced by the same agency. If the dispensation in question labour under no other defects than what apparently belong to other dispensations, these seeming defects do not justify us in, setting aside the proofs which are offered of its authenticity, if, they be otherwise entitled to credit.

Throughout that order then of nature, of which God is the author, what we find is a system of *beneficence*, but we are seldom or ever able to make out, a system of *optimism*.

I mean, that there are few cases in which, if we permit ourselves to range in possibilities, we cannot suppose something more perfect, and more unobjectionable, than what we see. The rain which descends from heaven is confessedly amongst the contrivanes of the Creator, for the sustentation of the animals and vegetables which subsist upon the surface of the earth. Yet how partially and irregularly is it supplied? How much of it falls upon the sea, where it can be of no use; how often is it wanted where it would be of the greatest? What tracts of continent are rendered desert by the scarcity of it? Or, not to speak of extreme cases, how much, sometimes, do inhabited countries suffer by its deficiency or delay?—We could imagine, if to imagine were our business, the matter to be otherwise regulated. We could imagine showers to fall, just where and when they would do good; always seasonable, every where sufficient; so distributed as not to leave a field upon the face of the globe scorched by drought, or even a plant withering for the lack of moisture. Yet does the difference between the real case and the imagined case, or the seeming inferiority of the one to the other, authorise us to say, that the present disposition of the atmosphere is not amongst the productions or the designs of the Deity? Does it check the inference which we draw from the confessed beneficence of the provision? or does it make us cease to admire the contrivance?—The observation, which he have exemplified in the single instance of the rain of heaven, may be repeated concerning most of the phenomena of nature: and the true conclusion to which it leads is this, that to inquire what the Deity might have done, could have done, or, as we even sometimes presume to speak, ought to have done, or, in hypothetical cases, would have done, and to build any propositions upon such inquiries against evidence of facts, is wholly unwarrantable. It is a mode of reasoning, which will not do in natural history, which will not do in natural religion, which cannot therefore be applied with safety to revelation.

It may have some foundation, in certain speculative *a priori* ideas of the divine attributes; but it has none in experience, or in analogy. The general character of the works of nature is, on the one hand, goodness both in design and effect; and, on the other hand, a liability to difficulty, and to objections, if such objections be allowed, by reason of seeming incompleteness or uncertainty in attaining their end. Christianity participates of this character. The true similitude between nature and revelation consists in this; that they each bear strong marks of their original; that they each also bear appearances of irregularity and defect. A system of strict optimism may nevertheless be the real system in both cases. But what I contend is, that the proof is hidden from *us*; that we ought not to expect to perceive that in revelation, which we hardly perceive in any thing; that beneficence of which we *can* judge, ought to satisfy us, that optimism, of which we *cannot* judge, ought not to be sought after. We can judge of beneficence, because it depends upon effects which we experience, and upon the relation between the means which we see acting, and the ends which we see produced. We cannot judge of optimism, because it necessarily implies a comparison of that which is tried, with that which is not tried; of consequences which we see, with others which we imagine, and concerning many of which, it is more than probable, we know nothing; concerning some, that we have no notion.

If Christianity be compared with the state and progress of natural religion, the argument of the objector will gain nothing by the comparison. I remember hearing an unbeliever say, that if God had given a revelation, he would have written it in the skies. Are the truths of natural religion written in the skies, or in a language which every one reads? or is this the case with the most useful arts, or the most necessary sciences of human life? An Otaheitean or an Esquimaux knows nothing of Christianity; does he know more of the principles of deism or morality? which, notwithstanding his ignorance, are neither untrue, nor unimportant, nor uncertain. The existence of the Deity is left to be collected from observations, which every man does not make, which every man, perhaps, is not capable of making. Can it be argued, that God does not exist, because, if he did, he would let us see him, or discover himself to mankind by proofs, (such as, we may think, the nature of the subject merited) which no inadvertency could miss, no prejudice withstand?

If Chriſtianity be regarded as a providential inſtrument for the melioration of mankind, its progreſs and diffuſion reſembles that of other cauſes, by which human life is improved. The diverſity is not greater, nor the advance more ſlow in religion, than we find it to be in learning, liberty, government, laws. The Deity hath never touched the order of nature in vain. The Jewiſh religion produced great and permanent effects: the Chriſtian religion hath done the ſame. It hath diſpoſed the world to amendment. It hath put things in a train. It is by no means improbable that it may become univerſal, and that the world may continue in that ſtate ſo long, as that the duration of its reign may bear a vaſt proportion to the time of its partial influence.

When we argue concerning Chriſtianity, that it muſt neceſſarily be true, becauſe it is beneficial, we go perhaps too far on one ſide: and we certainly go too far on the other, when we conclude that it muſt be falſe, becauſe it is not ſo efficacious as we could have ſuppoſed. The queſtion of its truth is to be tried upon its proper evidence, without deferring much to this ſort of argument, on either ſide. "The evidence," as biſhop Butler hath rightly obſerved, "depends upon the judgment we form of human conduct, under given circumſtances, of which it may be preſumed that we know ſomething; the objection ſtands upon the ſuppoſed conduct of the Deity, under relations with which we are not acquainted."

What would be the real effect of that overpowering evidence which our adverſaries required in a revelation, it is difficult to foretel; at leaſt we muſt ſpeak of it as of a diſpenſation, of which we have no experience. Some conſequences however would, it is probable, attend this economy, which do not ſeem to befit a revelation that proceeds from God. One is, that irreſiſtible proof would reſtrain the voluntary powers too much; would not anſwer the purpoſe of trial and probation; would call for no exerciſe of candour, ſeriouſneſs, humility, inquiry; no ſubmiſſion of paſſions, intereſts and prejudices, to moral evidence and to probable truth; no habits of reflection; none of that previous deſire to learn and to obey the will of God, which forms perhaps the teſt and merit of the virtuous principle, and which induces men to attend, with care and reverence, to every credible intimation of that will, and to reſign preſent advantages and preſent pleaſures to any reaſonable expectation of propitiating his favour. "Men's moral probation may be,

whether they will take due care to inform themſelves by impartial conſideration; and, afterwards, whether they will act as the caſe requires, upon the evidence which they have. And this, we find, by experience, is often our probation in our temporal capacity."[a]

II. Theſe modes of communication would leave no place for the admiſſion of *internal evidence*; which ought, perhaps, to bear a conſiderable part in the proof of every revelation, becauſe it is a ſpecies of evidence which applies itſelf to the knowledge, love, and practice of virtue, and which operates in proportion to the degree of thoſe qualities which it finds in the perſon whom it addreſſes. Men of good diſpoſitions, amongſt Chriſtians, are greatly affected by the impreſſion which the ſcriptures themſelves make upon their minds. Their conviction is much ſtrengthened by theſe impreſſions. And this perhaps was intended to be one effect to be produced by the religion. It is likewiſe true, to whatever cauſe we aſcribe it; (for I am not in this work at liberty to introduce the Chriſtian doctrine of grace or aſſiſtance, or the Chriſtian promiſe, "that, if any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God"[b]) it is true, I ſay, that they who ſincerely act or ſincerely endeavour to act, *according* to what they believe, that is, according to the juſt reſult of the probabilities, or, if you pleaſe, the poſſibilities in natural and revealed religion, which they themſelves perceive, and according to a rational eſtimate of conſequences, and, above all, according to the juſt effect of thoſe principles of gratitude and devotion, which even the view of nature generates in a well-ordered mind, ſeldom fail of proceeding farther. This alſo may have been exactly what was deſigned.

Whereas, may it not be ſaid, that irreſiſtible evidence would confound all characters, and all diſpoſitions? would ſubvert rather than promote the true purpoſe of the divine counſels, which is not to produce obedience by a force little ſhort of mechanical conſtraint, (which obedience would be regularity, not virtue, and would hardly perhaps differ from that which inanimate bodies pay to the laws impreſſed upon their nature) but to treat moral agents agreeably to what they are; which is done, when light and motives are of ſuch kinds, and are imparted in ſuch meaſures, that the influence of them depends upon the recipients themſelves? "It is not meet to govern rational free agents

[a] Butler's Analogy, part II. c. vi. [b] John vii. 17.

in viâ by ſight and ſenſe. It would be no trial or thanks to the moſt ſenſual wretch to forbear ſinning if heaven and hell were open to his ſight That ſpiritual viſion and fruition is our ſtate in patriâ." (Baxter's Reaſons, p. 357.) There may be truth in this thought, though roughly expreſſed. Few things are more improbable than that we (the human ſpecies) ſhould be the higheſt order of beings in the univerſe; that animated nature ſhould aſcend from the loweſt reptile to us, and all at once ſtop there. If there be claſſes above us of rational intelligences, clearer manifeſtations may belong to them. This may be one of the diſtinctions; and it may be one to which we ourſelves hereafter ſhall attain.

III. But thirdly; may it not alſo be aſked, whether the perfect diſplay of a future ſtate of exiſtence would be compatible with the activity of civil life, and with the ſucceſs of human affairs? I can eaſily conceive that this impreſſion may be overdone; that it may ſo ſeize and fill the thoughts, as to leave no place for the cares and offices of men's ſeveral ſtations, no anxiety for worldly proſperity, or even for a worldly proviſion, and, by conſequence, no ſufficient ſtimulus to ſecular induſtry. Of the firſt Chriſtians we read, "that all that believed were together, and had all things common; and ſold their poſſeſſions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need; and, continuing daily, with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from houſe to houſe, did eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart."[a] This was extremely natural, and juſt what might be expected, from miraculous evidence coming with full force upon the ſenſes of mankind: but I much doubt, whether, if this ſtate of mind had been univerſal, or long continued, the buſineſs of the world could have gone on. The neceſſary arts of ſocial life would have been little cultivated. The plough and the loom would have ſtood ſtill. Agriculture, manufactures, trade, and navigation, would not, I think, have flouriſhed, if they could have been exerciſed at all. Men would have addicted themſelves to contemplative and aſcetic lives, inſtead of lives of buſineſs, and of uſeful induſtry. We obſerve that St. Paul found it neceſſary, frequently to recall his converts to the ordinary labours and domeſtic duties of their condition; and to give them, in his own example, a leſſon of contented application to their worldly employments.

[a] Acts ii. 44—46.

By the manner in which the religion is now propoſed, a great portion of the human ſpecies is enabled, and of theſe, multitudes of every generation are induced to ſeek and to effectuate their ſalvation through the medium of Chriſtianity, without interruption of the proſperity or of the regular courſe of human affairs.

CHAP. VII.

The ſuppoſed Effects of Chriſtianity.

THAT a religion, which, under every form in which it is taught, holds forth the final reward of virtue, and puniſhment of vice, and propoſes thoſe diſtinctions of virtue and vice, which the wiſeſt and moſt cultivated part of mankind confeſs to be juſt, ſhould not be believed, is very poſſible; but that, ſo far as it is believed, it ſhould not produce any good, but rather a bad effect upon public happineſs, is a propoſition, which it requires very ſtrong evidence to render credible. Yet many have been found to contend for this paradox, and very confident appeals have been made to hiſtory, and to obſervation, for the truth of it.

In the concluſions, however, which theſe writers draw, from what they call experience, two ſources, I think, of miſtake, may be perceived.

One is, that they look for the influence of religion in the wrong place:

The other, that they charge Chriſtianity with many conſequences, for which it is not reſponſible.

1. The influence of religion is not to be ſought for, in the councils of princes, in the debates or reſolutions of popular aſſemblies, in the conduct of governments towards their ſubjects, or of ſtates and ſovereigns towards one another, of conquerors at the head of their armies, or of parties intriguing for power at home, (topics, which alone almoſt occupy the attention, and fill the pages of hiſtory) but muſt be perceived, if perceived at all, in the ſilent courſe of private and domeſtic life. Nay more; even *there* its influence may not be very obvious to obſervation. If it check in ſome degree, perſonal diſſoluteneſs, if it beget a general probity in the tranſaction of buſineſs, if it produce ſoft and humane manners in the maſs of the community, and occaſional exertions of laborious or expenſive benevolence

in a few individuals, it is all the effect which can offer itself to external notice. The kingdom of heaven is within us. That which is the substance of the religion, its hopes and consolations, its intermixture with the thoughts by day and by night, the devotion of the heart, the control of appetite, the steady direction of the will to the commands of God, is necessarily invisible. Yet upon these depends the virtue, and the happiness of millions. This cause renders the representations of history, with respect to religion, defective and fallacious, in a greater degree than they are upon any other subject. Religion operates most upon those of whom history knows the least; upon fathers and mothers in their families, upon men-servants and maid-servants, upon the orderly tradesman, the quiet villager, the manufacturer at his loom, the husbandman in his fields. Amongst such its influence collectively may be of inestimable value, yet its effects in the mean time little, upon those who figure upon the stage of the world. *They* may know nothing of it; they may believe nothing of it; they may be actuated by motives more impetuous than those which religion is able to excite. It cannot, therefore, be thought strange, that this influence should elude the grasp and touch of public history; for what is public history, but a register of the successes and disappointments, the vices, the follies, and the quarrels, of those who engage in contentions for power?

I will add, that much of this influence may be felt in times of public distress, and little of it in times of public wealth and security. This also increases the uncertainty of any opinions that we draw from historical representations. The influence of Christianity is commensurate with no effects which history states. We do not pretend that it has any such necessary and irresistible power over the affairs of nations, as to surmount the force of other causes.

The Christian religion also acts upon public usages and institutions, by an operation which is only secondary and indirect. Christianity is not a code of civil law. It can only reach public institutions through private character. Now its influence upon private character may be considerable, yet many public usages and institutions, repugnant to its principles, may remain. To get rid of these, the reigning part of the community must act, and act together. But it may be long before the persons, who compose this body, be sufficiently touched with the Christian character, to join in the suppression of practices to which

they and the public have been reconciled by that which will reconcile the human mind to any thing, habit and intereſt. Nevertheleſs, the effects of Chriſtianity, even in this view, have been important. It has mitigated the conduct of war, and the treatment of captives. It has ſoftened the adminiſtration of deſpotic, or of nominally deſpotic governments. It has aboliſhed polygamy. It has reſtrained the licentiouſneſs of divorces. It has put an end to the expoſure of children, and the immolation of ſlaves. It has ſuppreſſed the combats of gladiators, [a] and the impurities of religious rites. It has baniſhed, if not unnatural vices, at leaſt the toleration of them. It has greatly meliorated the condition of the laborious part, that is to ſay, of the maſs of every community, by procuring for them a day of weekly reſt. In all countries, in which it is profeſſed, it has produced numerous eſtabliſhments for the relief of ſickneſs and poverty; and, in ſome, a regular and general proviſion by law. It has triumphed over the ſlavery eſtabliſhed in the Roman empire: it is contending, and, I truſt, will one day prevail, againſt the worſe ſlavery of the Weſt-Indies.

A Chriſtian writer,[b] ſo early as in the ſecond century, has teſtified the reſiſtance which Chriſtianity made to wicked and licentious practices, though eſtabliſhed by law and by public uſage. "Neither in Parthia, do the Chriſtians, though Parthians, uſe polygamy; nor in Perſia, though Perſians, do they marry their own daughters; nor, among the Bactri or Galli, do they violate the ſanctity of marriage; nor, wherever they are, do they ſuffer themſelves to be overcome, by ill-conſtituted laws and manners."

Socrates did not deſtroy the idolatry of Athens, or produce the ſlighteſt revolution in the manners of his country.

But the argument to which I recur is, that the benefit of religion being felt chiefly in the obſcurity of private ſtations, neceſſarily eſcapes the obſervation of hiſtory. From the firſt general notification of Chriſtianity to the preſent day, there have been in every age many millions whoſe names were never heard of, made better by it, not only in their conduct, but in their

a Lipſius affirms, (Sat. B. i. c. 12) that the gladiatorical ſhows ſometimes coſt Europe twenty or thirty thouſand lives in a month; and that not only the men, but even the women of all ranks, were paſſionately fond of theſe ſhows. See Biſhop Porteus's Sermon XIII.

b Bardeſanes ap. Euſeb. præp. evang. vi. 10.

disposition; and happier, not so much in their external circumstances, as in that which is *inter præcordia*, in that which alone deserves the name of happiness, the tranquillity and consolation of their thoughts. It has been, since its commencement, the author of happiness and virtue to millions and millions of the human race. Who is there that would not wish his son to be a Christian?

Christianity also, in every country in which it is professed, hath obtained a sensible, although not a complete influence, upon the public judgment of morals. And this is very important. For without the occasional correction which public opinion receives, by referring to some fixed standard of morality, no man can foretel into what extravagancies it might wander. Assassination might become as honourable as duelling. Unnatural crimes be accounted as venial as fornication. In this way it is possible, that many may be kept in order by Christianity, who are not themselves Christians. They may be guided by the rectitude which it communicates to public opinion. Their consciences may suggest their duty truly, and they may ascribe these suggestions to a moral sense, or to the native capacity of the human intellect, when in fact they are nothing more than the public opinion reflected from their own minds; an opinion, in a considerable degree, modified by the lessons of Christianity. "Certain it is, and this is a great deal to say, that the generality, even of the meanest and most vulgar and ignorant people, have truer and worthier notions of God, more just and right apprehensions concerning his attributes and perfections, a deeper sense of the difference of good and evil, a greater regard to moral obligations and to the plain and most necessary duties of life, and a more firm and universal expectation of a future state of rewards and punishments, than, in any heathen country, any considerable number of men were found to have had."[a]

After all, the value of Christianity is not to be appreciated by its *temporal* effects. The object of revelation is to influence human conduct in this life; but what is gained to happiness by that influence, can only be estimated by taking in the whole of human existence. Then, as hath already been observed, there may be also great consequences of Christianity, which do not belong to it as a revelation. The effects upon human salvation, of the mission, of the death, of the present, of the future agency

[a] Clark, Ev. Nat. Rev. p. 208. ed. v.

of Christ, may be universal, though the religion be not universally known.

Secondly, I assert that Christianity is charged with many consequences, for which it is not responsible. I believe that religious motives have had no more to do, in the formation of nine-tenths of the intolerant and persecuting laws, which in different countries have been established upon the subject of religion, than they have had to do in England with the making of the game laws. These measures, although they have the Christian religion for their subject, are resolvable into a principle, which Christianity certainly did not plant, (and which Christianity could not universally condemn, because it is not universally wrong) which principle is no other than this, that they who are in possession of power do what they can to keep it. Christianity is answerable for no part of the mischief which has been brought upon the world by persecution, except that which has arisen from *conscientious* persecutors. Now these perhaps have never been, either numerous, or powerful. Nor is it to Christianity that even *their* mistake can fairly be imputed. They have been misled by an error, not properly Christian or religious, but by an error in their moral philosophy. They pursued the particular, without adverting to the general consequence. Believing certain articles of faith, or a certain mode of worship, to be highly conducive, or perhaps essential to salvation, they thought themselves bound to bring all they could, by every means, into them. And this they thought, without considering what would be the effect of such a conclusion, when adopted amongst mankind as a general rule of conduct. Had there been in the New Testament, what there are in the Koran, precepts authorising coercion in the propagation of the religion, and the use of violence towards unbelievers, the case would have been different. This distinction could not have been taken, or this defence made.

I apologize for no species nor degree of persecution, but I think that even the fact has been exaggerated. The slave-trade destroys more in a year, than the inquisition does in a hundred, or perhaps hath done since its foundation.

If it be objected, as I apprehend it will be, that Christianity is chargeable with every mischief, of which it has been the *occasion*, though not the motive; I answer, that if the malevolent passions be there, the world will never want occasions. The noxious element will always find a conductor. Any point will pro-

duce an explosion. Did the applauded intercommunity of the Pagan theology preserve the peace of the Roman world? Did it prevent oppressions, proscriptions, massacres, devastations? Was it bigotry that carried Alexander into the East, or brought Cæsar into Gaul? are the nations of the world, into which Christianity hath not found its way, or from which it hath been banished free from contentions? are their contentions less ruinous and sanguinary? Is it owing to Christianity, or to the want of it, that the finest regions of the East, the countries *inter quatuor maria*, the peninsula of Greece, together with a great part of the Mediterranean coast, are at this day a desert; that the banks of the Nile, whose constantly renewed fertility is not to be impaired by neglect, or destroyed by the ravages of war, serves only for the scene of a ferocious anarchy, or the supply of unceasing hostilities. Europe itself has known no religious wars for some centuries, yet has hardly ever been without war. Are the calamities, which at this day afflict it, to be imputed to Christianity? Hath Poland fallen by a Christian crusade? Hath the overthrow in France, of civil order and security, been effected by the votaries of our religion, or by the foes? Amongst the awful lessons, which the crimes and the miseries of that country afford to mankind, this is one, that, in order to be a persecutor it is not necessary to be a bigot; that in rage and cruelty, in mischief and destruction, fanaticism itself can be outdone by infidelity.

Finally, if war, as it is now carried on between nations, produce less misery and ruin than formerly, we are indebted, perhaps to Christianity for the change, more than to any other cause. Viewed therefore even in its relation to this subject, it appears to have been of advantage to the world. It hath humanized the conduct of wars; it hath ceased to excite them.

The differences of opinion, that have in all ages prevailed amongst Christians, fall very much within the alternative which has been stated. If we possessed the disposition which Christianity labours, above all other qualities, to inculcate, these differences would do little harm. If that disposition be wanting, other causes, even were these absent, would continually rise up, to call forth the malevolent passions into action. Differences of opinion, when accompanied with mutual charity, which Christianity forbids them to violate, are for the most part innocent, and for some purposes useful. They promote inquiry, discussion, and knowledge. They help to keep up an attention to religious

ſubjects, and a concern about them, which might be apt to die away in the calm and ſilence of univerſal agreement. I do not know that it is in any degree true, that the influence of religion is the greateſt, where there are the feweſt diſſenters.

CHAP. VIII.

The Concluſion.

IN religion, as in every other ſubject of human reaſoning, much depends upon the *order* in which we diſpoſe our inquiries. A man who takes up a ſyſtem of divinity with a previous opinion that either every part muſt be true, or the whole falſe, approaches the diſcuſſion with great diſadvantage. No other ſyſtem, which is founded upon moral evidence, would bear to be treated in the ſame manner. Nevertheleſs, in a certain degree, we are all introduced to our religious ſtudies under this prejudication; and it cannot be avoided. The weakneſs of the human judgment in the early part of youth, yet its extreme ſuſceptibility of impreſſion, renders it neceſſary to furniſh it with ſome opinions, and with ſome principles or other. Or indeed, without much expreſs care, or much endeavour for this purpoſe, the tendency of the mind of man, to aſſimilate itſelf to the habits of thinking and ſpeaking which prevail around him, produces the ſame effect. That indifferency and ſuſpenſe, that waiting and equilibrium of the judgment, which ſome require in religious matters, and which ſome would wiſh to be aimed at in the conduct of education, are impoſſible to be preſerved. They are not given to the condition of human life.

It is a conſequence of this ſituation that the doctrines of religion come to us before the proofs; and come to us with that mixture of explications and inferences from which no public creed is, or can be, free. And the effect which too frequently follows, from Chriſtianity being preſented to the underſtanding in this form, is, that when any articles which appear as parts of it, contradict the apprehenſion of the perſons to whom it is propoſed, men of raſh and confident tempers, haſtily and indiſcriminately reject the whole. But is this to do juſtice, either to themſelves, or to the religion? The rational way of treating a ſubject of ſuch acknowledged importance is to attend, in the firſt place, to the general and ſubſtantial truth of its principles, and to that

alone. When we once feel a foundation, when we once perceive a ground of credibility in its history, we shall proceed with safety to inquire into the interpretation of its records, and into the doctrines which have been deduced from them. Nor will it either endanger our faith, or diminish or alter our motives for obedience, if we should discover that these conclusions are formed with different degrees of probability, and possess different degrees of importance.

This conduct of the understanding, dictated by every rule of right reasoning, will uphold personal Christianity even in those countries in which it is established under forms the most liable to difficulty and objection. It will also have the further effect of guarding us against the prejudices which are wont to arise in our minds to the disadvantage of religion, from observing the numerous controversies which are carried on amongst its professors, and likewise of inducing a spirit of lenity and moderation in our judgment, as well as in our treatment, of those who stand, in such controversies, upon sides opposite to ours. What is clear in Christianity we shall find to be sufficient, and to be infinitely valuable; what is dubious, unnecessary to be decided, or of very subordinate importance; and what is most obscure, will teach us to bear with the opinions which others may have formed upon the same subject. We shall say to those, who the most widely dissent from us, what Augustine said to the worst heretics of his age: "Illi in vos saeviant, qui nescient, cum quo labore verum inveniatur, et quam difficile caveantur errores—qui nesciunt, cum quantâ difficultate sanetur oculus interioris hominis—qui nesciunt, quibus suspiriis et gemitibus fiat, ut ex quantulacunque parte possit intelligi Deus."[a]

A judgment, moreover, which is once pretty well satisfied of the general truth of the religion, will not only thus discriminate in its doctrines, but will possess sufficient strength to overcome the reluctance of the imagination to admit articles of faith which are attended with difficulty of apprehension, if such articles of faith appear to be truly parts of the revelation. It was to be expected beforehand, that what related to the economy and to the persons of the invisible world, which revelation professes to do, and which, if true, it actually does, should contain some points remote from our analogies, and from the comprehension of a mind which hath acquired all its ideas from sense and from experience.

[a] Aug. Contr. Ep. fund. cap. 2. n. 2, 3.

It hath been my care, in the preceding work, to preſerve the ſeparation between evidences and doctrines as inviolable as I could; to remove from the primary queſtion all conſiderations which have been unneceſſarily joined with it; and to offer a defence of Chriſtianity, which every Chriſtian might read, without ſeeing the tenets in which he had been brought up attacked or decried: and it always afforded a ſatisfaction to my mind to obſerve that this was practicable; that few or none of our many controverſies with one another affect or relate to the proofs of our religion; that the rent never deſcends to the foundation.

The truth of Chriſtianity depends upon its leading facts, and upon them alone. Now of theſe we have evidence which ought to ſatisfy us, at leaſt until it appear that mankind have ever been deceived by the ſame. We have ſome uncontеſted and inconteſtible points, to which the hiſtory of the human ſpecies hath nothing ſimilar to offer. A Jewiſh peaſant changed the religion of the world, and that, without force, without power, without ſupport; without one natural ſource or circumſtance of attraction, influence or ſucceſs. Such a thing hath not happened in any other inſtance. The companions of this perſon, after he himſelf had been put to death for his attempt, aſſerted his ſupernatural character, founded upon his ſupernatural operations; and, in teſtimony of the truth of their aſſertions, i. e. in conſequence of their own belief of that truth, and, in order to communicate the knowledge of it to others, voluntarily entered upon lives of toil and hardſhip, and, with a full experience of their danger, committed themſelves to the laſt extremities of perſecution. This hath not a parallel. More particularly, a very few days after this perſon had been publickly executed, and in the very city in which he was buried, theſe his companions declared with one voice that his body was reſtored to life; that they had ſeen him, handled him, ate with him, converſed with him; and, in purſuance of their perſuaſion of the truth of what they told, preached his religion, with this ſtrange fact as the foundation of it, in the face of thoſe who had killed him, who were armed with the power of the country, and neceſſarily and naturally diſpoſed to treat his followers as they had treated himſelf; and having done this upon the ſpot where the event took place, carried the intelligence of it abroad, in deſpite of difficulties and oppoſition, and where the nature of their errand gave them nothing to expect but deriſion, inſult, and outrage. This is without example. Theſe three facts, I

think, are certain, and would have been nearly so, if the gospels had never been written. The Christian story, as to these points, hath never varied. No other hath been set up against it. Every letter, every discourse, every controversy, amongst the followers of the religion; every book written by them, from the age of its commencement to the present time, in every part of the world in which it hath been professed, and with every sect into which it hath been divided, (and we have letters and discourses written by contemporaries, by witnesses of the transaction, by persons themselves bearing a share in it, and other writings following that age in regular succession) *concur* in representing these facts in this manner. A religion, which now possesses the greatest part of the civilized world, unquestionably sprang up at Jerusalem at this time. Some account must be given of its origin, some cause assigned for its rise. All the accounts of this origin, all the explications of this cause, whether taken from the writings of the early followers of the religion, in which, and in which perhaps alone, it could be expected that they should be distinctly unfolded, or from occasional notices in other writings of that or the adjoining age, either expressly allege the facts above stated as the means by which the religion was set up, or advert to its commencement in a manner which agrees with the supposition of these facts being true, which renders them probable according to the then state of the world, and which testifies their operation and effects.

These propositions alone lay a foundation for our faith, for they prove the existence of a transaction, which cannot even in its most *general* parts be accounted for upon any reasonable supposition, except that of the truth of the mission. But the particulars, the *detail* of the miracles or miraculous pretences (for such there necessarily must have been) upon which this unexampled transaction rested, and *for* which these men acted and suffered as they did act and suffer, it is undoubtedly of great importance to us to know. We *have* this detail from the fountain head, from the persons themselves; in accounts written by eye-witnesses of the scene, by contemporaries and companions of those who were so; not in one book, but four, each containing enough for the verification of the religion, all agreeing in the fundamental parts of the history. We have the authenticity of these books established by more and stronger proofs than belong to almost any other ancient book whatever and by proofs which widely distinguish them from any others claiming a simi-

lar authority to theirs. If there were any good reaſon for doubt concerning the names to which theſe books are aſcribed, (which there is not, for they were never aſcribed to any other, and we have evidence not long after their publication of their bearing the names which they now bear) their antiquity, of which there is no queſtion, their reputation and authority amongſt the early diſciples of the religion, of which there is as little, form a valid proof that they muſt, in the main at leaſt, have agreed with what the firſt teachers of the religion delivered.

When we open theſe ancient volumes, we diſcover in them marks of truth, whether we conſider each in itſelf, or collate them with one another. The writers certainly knew ſomething of what they were writing about, for they manifeſt an acquaintance with local circumſtances, with the hiſtory and uſages of the times, which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, living in that age. In every narrative we perceive ſimplicity and undeſignedneſs; the air and the language of reality. When we compare the different narratives together, we find them ſo varying as to repel all ſuſpicion of confederacy; ſo agreeing under this variety, as to ſhow that the accounts had one real tranſaction for their common foundation; often attributing different actions and diſcourſes to the perſon whoſe hiſtory, or rather memoirs of whoſe hiſtory, they profeſs to relate, yet actions and diſcourſes ſo ſimilar, as very much to beſpeak the ſame character; which is a coincidence, that, in ſuch writers as they were, could only be the conſequence of their writing from fact, and not from imagination.

Theſe four narratives are confined to the hiſtory of the Founder of the religion, and end with *his* miniſtry. Since however it is certain that the affair went on, we cannot help being anxious to know *how* it proceeded. This intelligence hath come down to us in a work purporting to be written by a perſon, himſelf connected with the buſineſs during the firſt ſtages of its progreſs, taking up the ſtory where the former hiſtories had left it, carrying on the narrative, oftentimes with great particularity, and throughout with the appearance of good ſenſe,[a] information and candour; ſtating all along the origin, and the only probable origin, of effects which unqueſtionably were produced, to-

[a] See Peter's ſpeech upon curing the cripple, (Acts iii. 18.) the council of the apoſtles, (xv.) Paul's diſcourſe at Athens, (xvii. 22.) before Agrippa. (xxvi.) I notice theſe paſſages, both as fraught with good ſenſe, and as free from the ſmalleſt tincture of enthuſiaſm.

gether with the natural consequences of situations which unquestionably did exist; and *confirmed* in the substance at least of the account, by the strongest possible accession of testimony which a history can receive, *original letters*, written by the person who is the principal subject of the history, written upon the business to which the history relates, and during the period, or soon after the period, which the history comprises. No man can say that this altogether is not a body of strong historical evidence.

When we reflect that some of those, from whom the books proceeded, are related to have themselves wrought miracles, to have been the subject of miracles, or of supernatural assistance in propagating the religion, we may perhaps be led to think, that more credit, or a different kind of credit, is due to these accounts, than what can be claimed by merely human testimony. But this is an argument which cannot be addressed to sceptics or unbelievers. A man must be a Christian before he can receive it. The inspiration of the historical scriptures, the nature, degree, and extent of that inspiration, are questions undoubtedly of serious discussion; but they are questions amongst Christians themselves, and not between them and others. The doctrine itself is by no means necessary to the belief of Christianity, which must, in the first instance at least, depend upon the ordinary maxims of historical credibility.[a]

In viewing the detail of miracles recorded in these books, we find every supposition negatived, by which they can be resolved into fraud or delusion. They were not secret, nor momentary, nor tentative, nor ambiguous; nor performed under the sanction of authority, with the spectators on their side, or in affirmance of tenets and practices already established. We find also the evidence alleged for them, and which evidence was by great numbers received, different from that upon which other miraculous accounts rest. It was contemporary, it was published upon the spot, it continued; it involved interests and questions of the greatest magnitude; it contradicted the most fixed persuasions and prejudices of the persons to whom it was addressed; it required from those who accepted it, not a simple indolent assent, but a change, from thenceforward, of principles and conduct, a submission to consequences the most serious and the most deterring, to loss and danger, to insult, outrage and persecution. How such a story should be false, or, if false, how under such

[a] See Powell's Discourses, Discourse IV. p. 245.

circumſtances it ſhould make its way, I think impoſſible to be explained; yet ſuch the Chriſtian ſtory was, ſuch were the circumſtances under which it came forth, and in oppoſition to ſuch difficulties did it prevail.

An event ſo connected with the religion, and with the fortunes of the Jewiſh people, as one of their race, one born amongſt them, eſtabliſhing his authority and his law throughout a great portion of the civilized world, it was perhaps to be expected, ſhould be noticed in the prophetic writings of that nation; eſpecially when this perſon, together with his own miſſion, cauſed alſo to be acknowledged the divine original of their inſtitution, and by thoſe who before had altogether rejected it. Accordingly we perceive in theſe writings, various intimations *concurring* in the perſon and hiſtory of Jeſus, in a manner, and in a degree, in which paſſages taken from theſe books, could not be made to concur, in any perſon arbitrarily aſſumed, or in any perſon, except him, who has been the author of great changes in the affairs and opinions of mankind. Of ſome of theſe predictions the weight depends a good deal upon the concurrence. Others poſſeſs great ſeparate ſtrength: one in particular does this in an eminent degree. It is an entire deſcription, manifeſtly directed to one character and to one ſcene of things: it is extant in a writing, or collection of writings, declaredly prophetic; and it applies to Chriſt's character, and to the circumſtances of his life and death, with conſiderable preciſion, and in a way which no diverſity of interpretation hath, in my opinion, been able to confound. That the advent of Chriſt, and the conſequences of it, ſhould not have been more diſtinctly revealed in the Jewiſh ſacred books, is, I think, in ſome meaſure acounted for by the conſideration, that for the Jews to have foreſeen the fall of their inſtitution, and that it was to merge at length into a more perfect and comprehenſive diſpenſation, would have cooled too much, and relaxed, their zeal for it, and their adherence to it, upon which zeal and adherence, the preſervation in the world of any remains, for many ages, of religious truth, might in a great meaſure depend.

Of what a revelation diſcloſes to mankind, one, and only one queſtion can properly be aſked, "was it of importance to mankind to know, or to be better aſſured of?" In this queſtion, when we turn our thoughts to the great Chriſtian doctrine of the reſurrection of the dead, and of a future judgment, no doubt can poſſibly be entertained. He who gives me riches or hon-

ours does nothing; he who even gives me health does little, in compariſon with that, which lays before me juſt grounds for expecting a reſtoration to life, and a day of account and retribution: which thing Chriſtianity hath done for millions.

Other articles of the Chriſtian faith are only the adjuncts and circumſtances of this. They are however ſuch, as appear worthy of the original to which we aſcribe them. The morality of the religion, whether taken from the precepts or the example of its Founder, or from the leſſons of its primitive teachers, derived, as it ſhould ſeem, from what had been inculcated by their Maſter, is, in all its parts, wiſe and pure; neither adapted to vulgar prejudices, nor flattering popular notions, nor excuſing eſtabliſhed practices, but calculated, in the matter of its inſtruction, truly to promote human happineſs, and, in the form in which it was conveyed, to produce impreſſion and effect; a morality, which, let it have proceeded from any perſon whatever, would have been ſatisfactory evidence of his good ſenſe and integrity, of the ſoundneſs of his underſtanding and the probity of his deſigns; a morality, in every view of it, much more perfect, than could have been expected from the natural circumſtances and character of the perſon who delivered it; a morality, in a word, which is, and hath been, moſt beneficial to mankind.

Upon the greateſt therefore of all poſſible occaſions, and for a purpoſe of ineſtimable value, it pleaſed the Deity to vouchſafe a miraculous atteſtation. Having done this for the inſtitution, when this alone could fix its authority, or give to it a beginning, he committed its future progreſs to the natural means of human communication, and to the influence of thoſe cauſes, by which human conduct and human affairs are governed. The ſeed being ſown, was left to vegetate; the leaven being inſerted, was left to ferment; and both according to the laws of nature: laws, nevertheleſs, diſpoſed and controlled by that Providence which conducts the affairs of the univerſe, though by an influence inſcrutable, and generally undiſtinguiſhable by us. And in this Chriſtianity is analogous to moſt other proviſions for happineſs. The proviſion is made; and being made, is left to act according to laws, which, forming part of a more general ſyſtem, regulate this particular ſubject, in common with many others.

Let the conſtant recurrence to our obſervation, of contrivance, deſign, and wiſdom in the works of nature, once fix upon our minds the belief of a God, and after that all is eaſy. In

the counſels of a being, poſſeſſed of the power and diſpoſition, which the Creator of the univerſe muſt poſſeſs, it is not improbable that there ſhould be a future ſtate; it is not improbable that we ſhould be acquainted with it. A future ſtate rectifies every thing; becauſe if moral agents be made, in the laſt event, happy or miſerable, according to their conduct in the ſtation and under the circumſtances in which they are placed, it ſeems not very material by the operation of what cauſes, according to what rules, or even, if you pleaſe to call it ſo, by what chance or caprice, theſe ſtations are aſſigned, or theſe circumſtances determined. This hypotheſis, therefore, ſolves all that objection to the divine care and goodneſs, which the promiſcuous diſtribution of good and evil (I do not mean in the doubtful advantages of riches and grandeur, but in the unqueſtionably important diſtinctions of health and ſickneſs, ſtrength and infirmity, bodily eaſe and pain, mental alacrity and depreſſion) is apt on ſo many occaſions to create. This one truth changes the nature of things; gives order to confuſion; makes the moral world of a piece with the natural.

Nevertheleſs, a higher degree of aſſurance, than that to which it is poſſible to advance this, or any argument drawn from the light of nature, was neceſſary, eſpecially to overcome the ſhock, which the imagination and the ſenſes receive, from the effects and the appearances of death; and the obſtruction which from thence ariſes to the expectation of either a continued or a future exiſtence. This difficulty, although of a nature, no doubt, to act very forcibly, will be found, I think, upon reflection to reſide more in our habits of apprehenſion, than in the ſubject; and that the giving way to it, when we have any reaſonable grounds for the contrary, is rather an indulging of the imagination, than any thing elſe. Abſtractedly conſidered, that is, conſidered without relation to the difference, which habit, and merely habit, produces in our faculties and modes of apprehenſion, I do not ſee any thing more in the reſurrection of a dead man, than in the conception of a child; except it be this, that the one comes into his world with a ſyſtem of prior conſciouſneſſes about him, which the other does not; and no perſon will ſay, that he knows enough of either ſubject to perceive, that this circumſtance makes ſuch a difference in the two caſes, that the one ſhould be eaſy, and the other impoſſible; the one natural, the other not ſo. To the firſt man, the ſucceſſion of the ſpecies would be as incomprehenſible as the reſurrection of the dead is to us.

Thought is different from motion, perception from impact: the individuality of a mind is hardly consistent with the divisibility of an extended substance; or its volition, that is, its power of originating motion, with the inertness which cleaves to every portion of matter, which our observation or our experiments can reach. These distinctions lead us to an immaterial principle; at least, they do this; they so negative the mechanical properties of matter, in the constitution of a sentient, still more of a rational being, that no argument drawn from these properties, can be of any weight in opposition to other reasons, when the question respects the changes of which such a nature is capable, or the manner in which these changes are effected. Whatever thought be, or whatever it depend upon, the regular experience of *sleep* makes one thing concerning it certain, that it can be completely suspended, and completely restored.

If any one find it too great a strain upon his thoughts, to admit the notion of a substance strictly immaterial, that is, from which extension and solidity are excluded, he can find no difficulty in allowing, that a particle as small as a particle of light, minuter than all conceivable dimensions, may just as easily be the depository, the organ and the vehicle of consciousness, as the congeries of animal substance, which forms a human body, or the human brain; that, being so, it may transfer a proper identity to whatever shall hereafter be united to it; may be safe amidst the destruction of its integuments; may connect the natural with the spiritual, the corruptible with the glorified body. If it be said, that the mode and means of all this is imperceptible by our senses, it is only what is true of the most important agencies and operations. The great powers of nature are all invisible. Gravitation, electricity, magnetism, though constantly present, and constantly exerting their influence; though within us, near us, and about us; though diffused throughout all space, overspreading the surface, or penetrating the contexture of all bodies with which we are acquainted, depend upon substances and actions, which are totally concealed from our senses. The Supreme Intelligence is so himself.

But whether these, or any other attempts to satisfy the imagination, bear any resemblance to the truth, or whether the imagination, which, as I have said before, is the mere slave of habit, *can* be satisfied, or not; when a future state, and the revelation of a future state, is not only perfectly consistent with the

attributes of the Being who governs the univerſe; but when it is more; when it alone removes the appearances of contrariety, which attend the operations of his will towards creatures capable of merit and demerit, of reward and puniſhment; when a ſtrong body of hiſtorical evidence, confirmed by many internal tokens of truth and authenticity, gives us juſt reaſon to believe that ſuch a revelation hath actually been made; we ought to ſet our minds at reſt with the aſſurance, that, in the reſources of creative wiſdom, expedients cannot be wanted, to carry into effect what the Deity hath purpoſed: that either a new and mighty influence will deſcend upon the human world, to reſuſcitate extinguiſhed conſciouſneſs; or that, amidſt the other wonderful contrivances with which the univerſe abounds, and by ſome of which we ſee animal life, in many inſtances, aſſuming improved forms of exiſtence, acquiring new organs, new perceptions, and new ſources of enjoyment, proviſion is alſo made, though by methods ſecret to us (as all the great proceſſes of nature are) for conducting the objects of God's moral government, through the neceſſary changes of their frame, to thoſe final diſtinctions of happineſs and miſery, which he hath declared to be reſerved for obedience and tranſgreſſion, for virtue and vice, for the uſe and the neglect, the right and the wrong employment of the faculties and opportunities, with which he hath been pleaſed, ſeverally, to entruſt and to try us.

THE END.

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